SUNDAY
March 10, 2024

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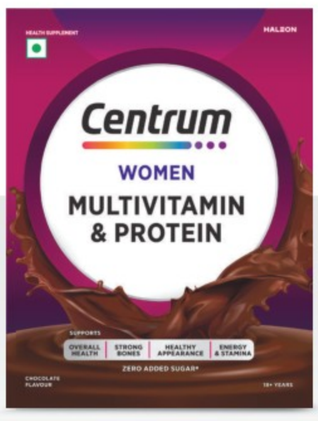

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GENOMICS

Why India needs a legal framework

It must ensure that the benefits of the technology are widely accessible

SCIENCE» PAGE 10

Asif Ali Zardari is new Pakistan President

WORLD » PAGE 14

Nepal's new coalition, old politics

PROFILES » PAGE 12

India claims Test series 4-1

SPORT » PAGE 15

BJP, TDP, JSP seal deal to contest polls together

The parties announce the decision in a joint statement; BJP likely to contest six Lok Sabha seats from the State, leaving two for the JSP and 17 for the TDP; specific seats still being negotiated

Nistula Hebbar
NEW DELHI

United fight: TDP president N. Chandrababu Naidu met BJP national president J.P. Nadda in New Delhi on Thursday. ANI

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Telegu Desam Party (TDP), and the Pawan Kalyan-led Jana Sena Party (JSP) have officially announced that they will join hands to fight the 2024 Lok Sabha election and the concurrently held Assembly election in Andhra Pradesh.

The joint statement on their alliance – which was initiated by BJP president J.P. Nadda, but also issued on behalf of TDP leader N. Chandrababu Naidu, and the JSP's Mr. Kalyan – came after three days of talks between the three parties in New Delhi to tie up loose ends. The statement says the alliance will fight together "under the dynamic and visionary leadership of Prime Minister [Narendra] Modi", but remains silent on the nuts and bolts of seat-sharing arrangements.

Seat-sharing

However, sources have confirmed to *The Hindu* that the BJP will contest six of the 25 Lok Sabha seats in Andhra Pradesh; the JSP, which was earlier expected to fight three seats, will now contest two, leaving 17 seats for the TDP. In the State Assembly, the BJP and JSP together will fight 30 out of 175 seats, leaving the rest for the TDP. "Specific seats are still being decided, and the sticking points remain Vishakhapatnam and Vijayawada, seats claimed by the BJP, but difficult for the TDP to part with for personal and political reasons," said a source in the TDP. A joint rally of the alliance is scheduled to be held around March 17 in Guntur, sources added.

The joint statement issued by the three parties said that the TDP and the BJP have a "very old relationship together". It noted that the TDP had joined the BJP-led NDA in 1996 and had "worked together successfully in Atalji's [former PM Atal Behari Vajpayee], and Narendra Modi ji's government."

This expansion of the NDA, BJP sources said, was important for the party's goal of reaching a 50% vote share in the upcoming Lok Sabha poll.

Arun Goel quits as EC ahead of polls

Sreeparna Chakrabarty
NEW DELHI

Days ahead of the announcement of the schedule for the upcoming Lok Sabha polls, Election Commissioner Arun Goel resigned on Saturday. His tenure was till 2027.

According to a notification by the Law Ministry, his resignation has been accepted by President Droupadi Murmu with effect from March 9. With the resignation, the Election Commission has been reduced to just one member – Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar. Election Commissioner Anup Chandra Pandey retired in February. Mr. Goel, a 1985-batch IAS officer of the Punjab cadre, joined the EC on November 21, 2022. His resignation comes two days before a crucial hearing of the Supreme Court on the electoral bonds issue.

CONTINUED ON » PAGE 7

NCB arrests Tamil film producer in drug racket case

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI/ CHENNAI

The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) on Saturday arrested Jaffer Sadiq, accused of being the kingpin in a ₹2,000 crore international drug trafficking racket, in Delhi. The network he set up allegedly trafficked approximately 3,500 kilograms of pseudoephedrine to Australia, New Zealand, and Malaysia in the guise of food-grade cargo.

Jaffer Sadiq alias Bezos is a Chennai resident and Tamil film producer, and also held the post of a deputy organiser of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam's NRI wing for the Chennai District-West.

After news of his alleged involvement in the drug racket came to light, he was expelled from the DMK on February 29. He had gone missing soon after the NCB and the Delhi Police Special Cell nabbed three persons in connection with the case. The NCB is also probing suspected political funding using drug money.

Jaffer Sadiq (centre) had gone missing following the arrests in connection with the case. ANI

NCB Deputy Director-General Gyaneshwar Singh told presspersons that Mr. Sadiq had been identified as the "mastermind" of the operation.

CONTINUED ON » PAGE 7

NEARBY

Railways ready to start talks on completing BSRP

BENGALURU
Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw has said that the Railways can execute and complete the BSRP faster than the State government and they were ready to start discussions on the same if the latter was willing. » Page 2

BWSSB to tap into groundwater resources

BENGALURU
BWSSB has decided to tap into the city's groundwater resources by filling the drying lakes with 1,300 MLD of treated water. » Page 3

CLASSIFIEDS » PAGES 2 & 4
MAGAZINE » 8 PAGES

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Watering hole: Birds congregate in the puddles of Doddakallasandra Lake in Bengaluru.

Not too late: A pair of painted storks arrive to fish in the lake.

Rich diversity: There's enough for both egrets and painted storks to eat in peace.

A flurry of feathers in a drying lake

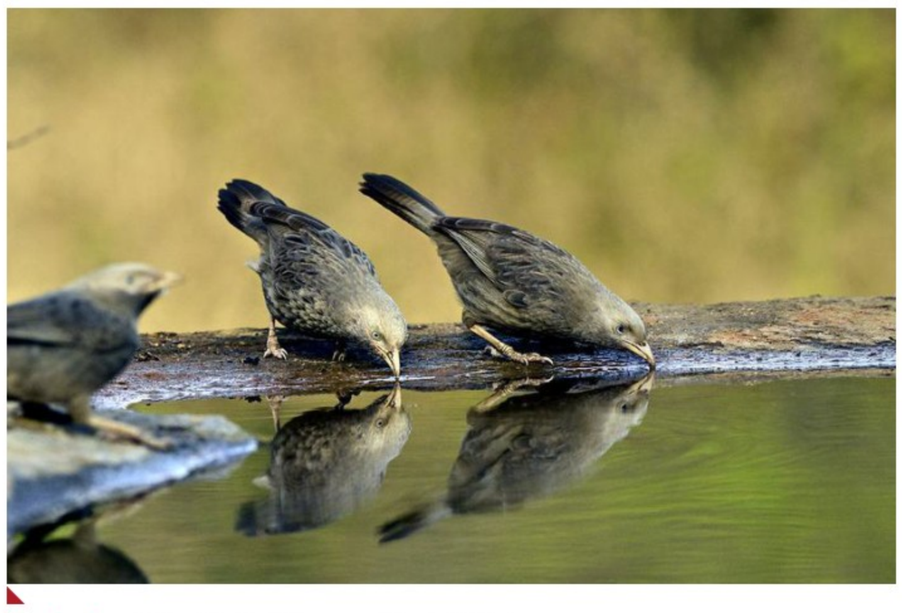
The Doddakallasandra Lake in Bengaluru, reeling under the effect of the drought gripping the whole of Karnataka, has become a feeding spot for many species of birds

K. Murali Kumar
muralikumar.k@thehindu.co.in

People in the south of Bengaluru who go on their regular morning walk around the Doddakallasandra Lake on Kanakapura Road were pleasantly surprised earlier this week to see a flurry of wings in the water body. As Karnataka reels under a drought induced by a failed monsoon, water in the lake has become confined to some patches where the birds had congregated. Among them were painted storks, black-headed ibis, little egrets, sandpipers, black-winged stilts, cormorants, grey-headed swamphens, peacocks and glossy ibises.

Many of these are long-legged and long-billed birds that forage in flocks in wetlands, searching for fish and insects. Painted storks, which have arrived in big numbers, is a large wader belonging to the stork family. It is classified as "Near Threatened" on the IUCN Red List. It has distinctive pink flight feathers, making it a treat to watch.

Purple swamphens can be seen chasing each other in the area. Some residents have expressed concern about the protection of the birds as stray dogs try to catch them in shallow water. Experts underline the importance of small lakes and their ecosystem in preserving biodiversity. Lakes under 10 hectares should be exempted from fishing licences as they support many bird species, urged Raghavendra B. Pachhapur, of the Doddakaallasandra Lake Protection Committee. He urged the government to preserve the natural habitat of the lakes.



Drop by drop: Yellow-billed babblers quenching their thirst.

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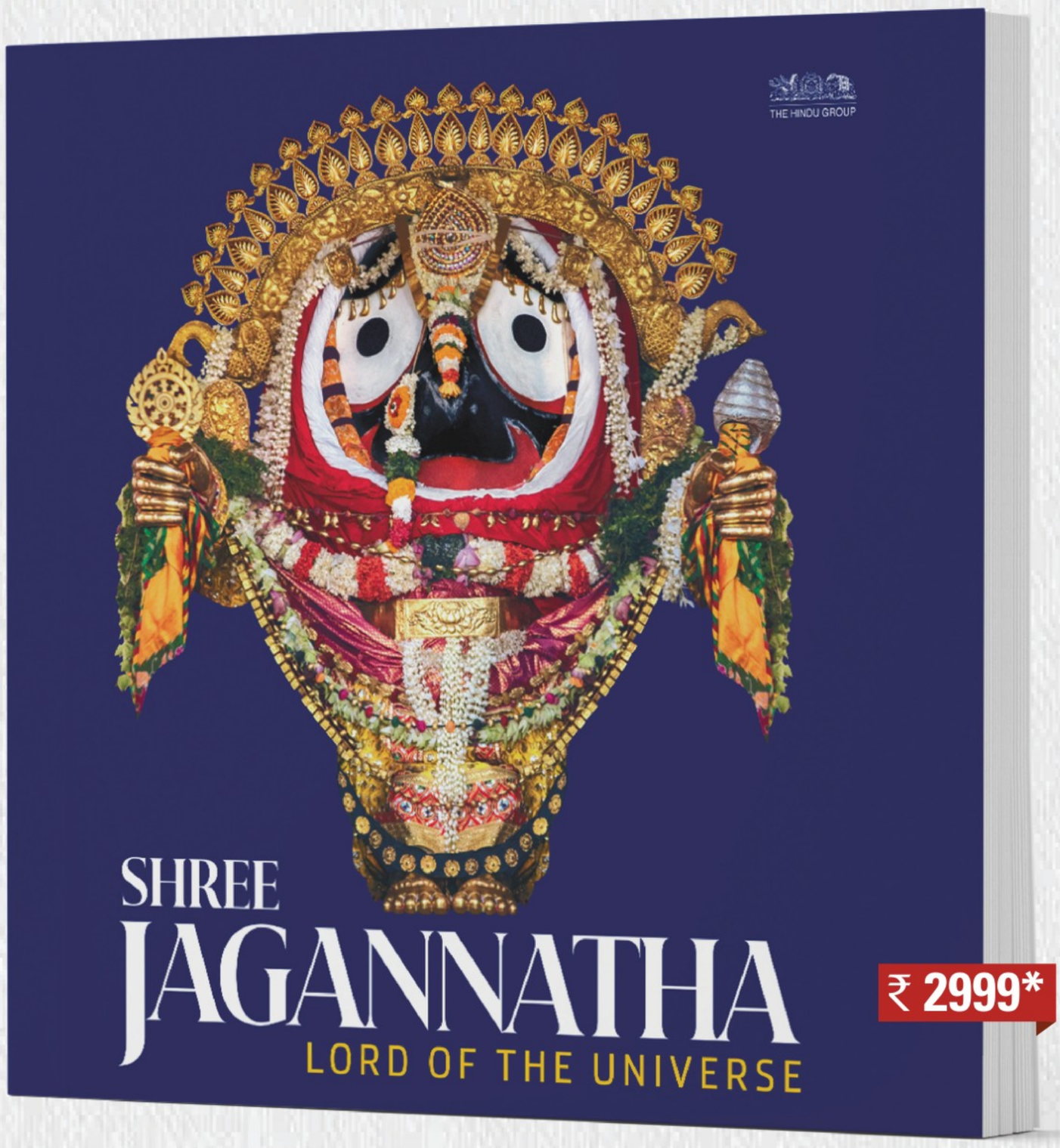

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‘If State govt. is willing, Railways can execute city’s suburban rail project’

Railway Minister says this is a technology-intensive project and the Railways is best placed with the expertise to execute it faster

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw has said that the Railways can execute and complete the Bengaluru Suburban Rail Project (BSRP) faster than the State government and they were ready to start discussions on the same if the latter was willing.

“This is a technology-intensive project and Indian Railways is best placed with the expertise to execute the project faster. I am saying this beyond politics. If the State government is willing, we can start talks on these lines,” he said. He was in the city on Saturday to participate in multiple events.

This is the first time the Union government has openly expressed its willingness in taking over the Bengaluru Suburban Rail Project. FILE PHOTO

This is the first time the Union government has openly expressed its willingness in taking over the project. Recently, Bengaluru South BJP MP Tejasvi Surya had said he had spoken to the Union Railway Minister and they were ready to take over the project for its speedy implementation. Presently, BSRP is being executed by Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV), the Rail Infrastructure Development Company (Karnataka) Ltd. between the State government and Indian Railways.

> Railway Board had approved the initial works of the Circular Railway Network for Bengaluru and had prepared estimates for the same.
>
> **ASHWINI VAISHNAW**
> Union Railway Minister

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in June 2022, while laying the foundation stone for the project, had said that the project had failed to take off for 40 years and he would ensure its completion in 40 months. However, recently the State government set a new deadline of end-of-2027 for the completion of the project.

‘Approval given’

Mr. Vaishnaw also said that the Railway Board has approved the initial works of the Circular Railway Network for Bengaluru and has prepared estimates for the same.

The 287-km network will connect Doddaballapur, Devanahalli, Malur, Heelalige and Solur towns around the city.

Vande Bharat sleeper trains to hit the tracks in six months

Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw inspecting the ongoing work on Vande Bharat sleeper train at BEML in Bengaluru on Saturday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Vande Bharat sleeper trains will begin operations in the next six months, said Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw.

He was speaking after inspecting the manufacturing of the Vande Bharat sleeper coaches on BEML Ltd. campus in Bengaluru. He also took a test ride on the metro coach, indigenously built by BEML.

The Union Minister said 10 Vande Bharat sleeper trains will start operations in the next six months and announced that Indian Railways had placed orders for 100 Amrit Bharat trains.

While the middle class people were comfortable with Vande Bharat trains, the lower income groups were comfortable with Amrit Bharat trains, and there has been a growing demand for both, he said.

Indian Railways places orders for 100 Amrit Bharat trains

After inspecting the completely “Made in India” Vande Bharat sleeper coaches at BEML, he said these coaches were more tech savvy than the existing Vande Bharat coaches. In these trains, the noise will be almost zero, helping passengers to have a sound sleep, he said, adding the entire design of the coach was new and more user friendly.

67 berths

The sleeper coach will have 67 berths and the climbing ladder has been designed for user comfort among other new features.

India’s fastest and indigenously designed IP/MPLS router launched

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

India’s fastest and indigenously designed IP/MPLS (Multiprotocol Label Switching) router was launched on Saturday in Bengaluru by Ashwini Vaishnaw, Union Minister for Communications, Electronics and Information Technology.

MPLS is a routing technique in telecommunications networks that directs data from one node to the next, based on labels rather than network addresses.

The unveiling of this cutting-edge router marks a momentous occasion for the nation, showcasing India’s prowess in technological innovation and self-reliance, said Mr. Vaishnaw, expressing immense pride in the development and launch of this secure core router, with a capacity of 2.4 Terabits per second (TBPS).

Mr. Vaishnaw said, “It is a matter of pride for us that indigenously developed and made in India router, a secure router, a core routers of capacity 2.4 TBPS has been developed and launched today. This is a core router, which is secure and which can actually provide very important functions in our entire Prime Minister’s vision of Digital India.”

One more Vande Bharat train to run between Mysuru and Chennai via Bengaluru

The Hindu Bureau
MYSURU

Rail connectivity between Mysuru, Bengaluru, and Chennai received a further fillip with the Railways announcing the introduction of second Vande Bharat connecting the three cities.

Train number 20663 Mysuru-MGR Chennai Vande Bharat Express will depart from Mysuru at 6 a.m. and arrive at MGR Chennai at 12.20 p.m. on all days except Wednesdays.

En route, it will have stoppages at Mandya (Arrival 6.28 a.m.; Departure 6.30 p.m), SMVT Bengaluru (7.45 a.m/7.50 a.m.); Krishnarajapuram (8.04 a.m./ 8.06 a.m.) and Katpadi (10.33 a.m/ 10.35 a.m). In the return direction, train number 20664 MGR Chennai-Mysuru Vande Bharat will depart from Chennai at 5 p.m. to reach Mysuru at 11.20 p.m. on all days except Wednesdays.

En route, it will have stoppages at Katpadi (Arrival 6.23 p.m. D 6.25 p.m), Krishnarajapuram (8.48 p.m./8.50 p.m.) SMVT Bengaluru (9.25 p.m./9.30 p.m.) and Mandya (10.38 p.m./10.40 p.m.).

Though the new service between Bengaluru and Chennai will become operational with effect from April 5, the services of the Mysuru leg will commence once the maintenance facility for Vande Bharat is completed and commissioned at Mysuru.

Kalaburagi-Bengaluru train flagged off

The Hindu Bureau
KALABURAGI

Umesh Jadhav, Kalaburagi MP, waved a green flag to launch the new weekly train from Kalaburagi to Bengaluru here on Saturday. He said that the train (01111) will depart from Kalaburagi station at 5.10 p.m. to reach SMVT Bengaluru by 4.15 a.m. next day. The Railways will run this train thrice a week from April 4.

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This notice is issued on behalf of My clients **Sri.Sathyanarayana.R S/o Sri.Ramanna.T** to bring the notice of the general public that the original absolute sale deed bearing doc No.DBP-1-07161/2018-19 of Book-1, Stored in CD No.DBPD455, Date.25.09.2018. And Original rectification deed doc No.DBP-1-04914/2020-21 of Book-1, Stored in CD No.DBPD905, Date.15.10.2020, both are registered in the office of the sub-registrar Doddaballapura, executed by **Sri.Srinivasa Rao in favour of Sri.Dilip.S** is missing / lost/ misplaced in respect of schedule property.
If any person/s, firm, company, institution or organization has any claim are holding the afore mentioned document or schedule property, they may contact the undersigned in writing within **7 days** from the date of this notice failing which it will be presumed that there are no claims.
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H. Prahlada, Advocate & Solicitor,
For H.P.Law, #2, 3rd Floor, Venkateshwara Complex, Yeshwanthpur, Bangalore-560022
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PUBLIC NOTICE
Our clients **SMT HAMSA B N**, wife of Sri. Dharmendra V Sarkar, 2. **SRI DHARMENDRA V SARKAR**, intend to purchase the Schedule Property from **SMT B.RENUKA**, wife of Sri B.Lokanadha Naidu, Residing at No.1197/C,22nd A Cross, BSK 2nd Stage, Bangalore – 560 070 and **SMT G.RADHA**, wife of Sri K.R.Gururaj, Residing at No.2342, 18th Cross, 18th Mai, BSK 2nd Stage, Bangalore- 560 070. Anyone having any claim, objections or any right in the said Property may contact the undersigned along with the documents relied upon, within 15 days from the date of this publication, failing which it will be presumed that no one has any claim over the same.
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East by : Road;
West by : remaining portion of same survey No 7/1;
North by : remaining portion of same survey No 7/1;
South by : Road;
Name and Address of Counsel:
K.S.RAGHAVENDRA
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Advocates
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Phone No. 23613681.

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East by : Road;
West by : Land belonging to Mr.Kempanna;
North by : Land in Sy.No.92;
South by : Land belonging to Mr.K.Nagaraju;
Item No.II: Sy.No.92 (Old Sy.No.7) measuring **36 guntas,** and bounded on
East by : Road;
West by : Land belonging to Mr.Kempanna;
North by : Land belonging to Mr.Patalaiah;
South by : Land in Sy.No.91;
from its Owner **Sri.T.S.Prajwal son of Swamy.T.R**
Persons having any right over the said property may lodge their objections/claims with documentary evidence within **10 days** from date of publication, to the undersigned.
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MEDICAL DEPARTMENT
E-TENDER NOTICE NO. PER042401
Medical Director, Headquarters Hospital, Southern Railway, Chennai-23 for and on behalf of the President of India, invites ONLINE open tender for **“SUPPLY OF ARTIFICIAL LIMBS, ORTHOTICS AND PROSTHETICS APPLIANCES UNDER RATE CONTRACT for TWO years”** as per TENDER Notice mentioned above in the IREPS website. The bidders are requested to log on to **http://www.ireps.gov.in -> login- E-Tender -> Tender module> medical**. The bidders need to be enrolled in the IREPS Portal for quoting e-tender. Only online tender will be accepted. It is the responsibility of the bidder to obtain a digital signature certificate for participating in e-tender. The Tender Document and terms and conditions of contract can be downloaded from the IREPS website - Documents - upload/view document - File name - Terms and Conditions of Contract pdf.
The online tender closing date and time is **11:00 hours on 29/03/2024.**
MEDICAL DIRECTOR
RAILWAY HOSPITAL, PERAMBUR
Follow us on: twitter.com/GMSRailway

SOUTHERN RAILWAY
(CONSTRUCTION ORGANISATION)
E-TENDER
TENDER NOTICE NO. 71-CECNMS-23-24-E-446937 DATED 26-02-2024
TENDER NOTICE NO. 72-CECNMS-23-24-E-442624 DATED 06-03-2024
For and on behalf of The President of India, The Chief Engineer, Construction, Southern Railway, Egmore, Chennai - 600008 invites e-tender for the following work(s) as per Notice Inviting Tender (NIT) in our portal **www.ireps.gov.in.** The tenderers/Contractors intending to apply for the tender needs to get enrolled in the portal **www.ireps.gov.in** and only online tenders will be accepted.

NAME OF THE WORK			
Madurai Division - Construction of ROB at Km.608/200-300 in lieu of LC No.494 (Km.608/000-100) between SQD-RMD stations. (TWO PACKET SYSTEM)			
Tiruchchirappalli - Thanjavur - Nagore: Gauge conversion with extension to Nagore - Karaikkal New BG line between Nagappattinam - Tiruturaipundi and Newline Peralam - Karaikkal. Earthwork in forming bank, Construction of Minor bridges and Limited use subway from Ch.12000 to 18000 (Reach-III) in between Peralam and Karaikkal (Balance work) (TWO PACKET SYSTEM)			
Cash Value (₹)	**Earnest Money Deposit (Rupee)**	**Period of Completion (Months)**	**Closing Date @ 15.30 Hrs**
208254353.92	1191300.00	18	19-04-2024
368197484.12	1991000.00	4	28-03-2024

For further details, please refer to web site portal www.ireps.gov.in or contact Office of the Chief Administrative Officer, Construction, E.V.R. High Road, Egmore, Chennai - 600 008.
Chief Engineer (Construction), Egmore, Chennai - 600 008.
for and On behalf of President of India
Follow us on: twitter.com/GMSRailway

SOUTHERN RAILWAY
TRIVANDRUM (WORKS BRANCH)
TRIVANDRUM DIVISION
E-TENDER NOTICE NO.V/W/TVC/5/2024 DATED 07-03-2024
Divisional Railway Manager/Works Branch/Trivandrum Division, Trivandrum-14 for and on behalf of the President of India invites ONLINE tenders for the following works as per tender notice and Complete details are given in our e-tender portal **www.ireps.gov.in**

Sl. No.	Description	App. Value (₹) In lakhs	Earnest Money Deposit (₹)
1	ADEN/TCR subdivision - Under water repairs for Br.No.98UP&DN,104UP&DN, 132UP&DN and 176UP.	49.22	98400
2	Thiruvananthapuram Division:- Proposed renewal of Existing Culverts with Rail/joist & slab, Stone slabs with RCC Box-12 bridges.	376.98	338500
3	TVC Division - Proposed Replacement of existing steel girders with PSC slab for Br. No. 128 Up (1x 12.20m) and Br.No.136 UP (1x 12.20m) in ERS-KTYM-KYJ section.	136.53	218300
4	TVC Yard - Manual deep screening and sleeper renewal of points and crossing.	117.19	208600
5	DRM Office complex: Improvements to DRM Office building - Personnel, Mechanical and Operation sections.	107.00	203500
6	ERS-KTYM-KYJ Section - Pro. Reconstruction of Exg. Bridge No. 297 (1x 4.57m PSC slab) as 1 x 6.10m RCC box at km. 58/00-100 between Ettumanur and Kottayam stations.	82.11	164200
7	1. Pro. Regirdering of Bridge No.161 Up (3 x 19.54 m span) at Km: 76/900-77/00 in SRR-ERS section 2. Pro. Regirdering of Bridge No. 174 Up. (1 x 18.30m span) At Km: 84/100-200 in ERS-KTYM-KYJ section 3. Pro. Jacketing and Inspection path of Br. No. 175 Up (3 x 24.40 span) in SRR - ERS section.	192.96	246500
8	TVC - Improvements to Track machine staff rest rooms.	69.81	139600
9	TVC Division - Proposed crash barriers on approaches of existing ROBs.	80.23	160500
10	Collection and training out of track ballast at PUDUKKAD depot.	266.86	283400

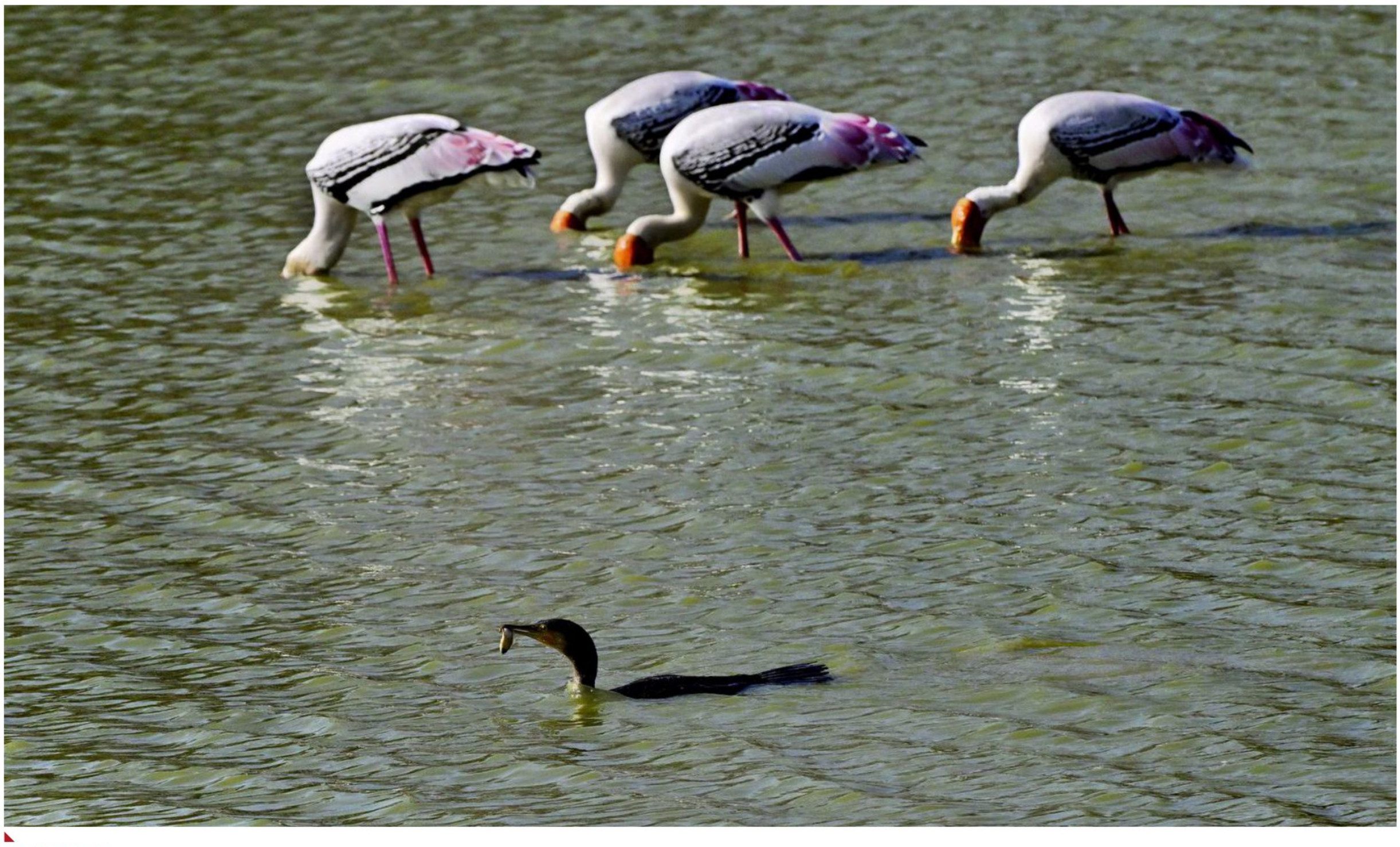
Period of completion in months: Sl. No. 1, 7, 9: SIX. **Sl. No. 2:** EIGHT. **Sl. No.: 3, 6, 8:** TEN. **Sl. No.:4, 5, 10:** TWELVE
Tender Closing date and time: Sl No: 1 to 10: 03-04-2024 at 11.00 hrs
Note: It is the responsibility of the tenderer to check any Corrigendum issued for any correction or modifications uploaded subsequently in website; the same shall be taken into account while submitting.
Divisional Railway Manager (Works) Trivandrum-14
Follow us on: twitter.com/GMSRailway

Calm and composed: A Brahminy kite perched on a tree overlooking the lake.

Noisy patch: Purple swamphens make a ruckus.

Hunger pangs: A grey heron has caught his meal for the day.

Satisfied customer: A grey heron about to take off from the lake.



Sneaking through: A cormorant manages to make off with its share, as painted storks forage in the background.

BWSSB to tap into city's groundwater resources

It plans to fill drying lakes with 1,300 MLD of treated water and install filter borewells on these lakebeds; Jakkur and Nayandahalli lakes, among others, chosen for this project

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Amidst the ongoing water crisis in Bengaluru, the Bangalore Water Supply and Sewage Board (BWSSB) has decided to tap into the city's groundwater resources by filling the drying lakes with 1,300 MLD of treated water. This initiative has been taken up in association with Indian Institute of Science (IISc).

"We have 1,300 MLD of treated water available with us. If we use it to fill tanks, which have dried up, then it will get rejuvenated in 10-15 days and the groundwater level will increase in the nearby areas. We will also install filter borewells on these lakebeds," said Ram Prasath Manohar, Chairman, BWSSB.

He added that water from these borewells will be treated and tested by IISc scientists and then will be supplied for non-consumption purposes.

He said that this will add around 20-30 MLD of water into the system. In a similar initiative, the Irrigation Department is supplying water in Devanahalli by treating the water in Kote lake.

In Bengaluru, BWSSB has chosen Jakkur lake, Attur lake, Nayandahalli lake, Chikkabanavara lake, Varthur lake and Agaram lake for this project.

The BWSSB has also started supplying treated water for non-domestic purposes to those who are in need. "Those who need it can book it on our application," Mr. Manohar said.

Cauvery water

Speaking at a press conference on Saturday, Mr. Manohar said that there was plenty of drinking water available in Bengaluru. "Bengaluru needs 2,100 MLD of water for drinking, out of which 1,450 MLD comes from Cauvery. There is sufficient water in the reservoirs which will last us till July. We need 8 TMC, but there is 34 TMC water in reservoirs. There is no need for Bengalureans to worry," he said.

He acknowledged that the remaining 650 MLD comes from borewell water and there is a 250 MLD deficit there due to exploitation of groundwater and lack of rain. "Where borewells are depleted, people are depending on Cauvery water and this is causing a stress on the system," he told *The Hindu*.

He also said that the 110 villages which do not have regular Cauvery supply have been allotted 79 water tankers of 6,000 litre capacity. He also said that 582 syntax tanks of 1,000-3,000 litre capacity have been installed in slums, low lying areas and other vulnerable localities which are being filled twice everyday.

"We are also augmenting our capacity with various means. Cauvery phase 5 of 775 MLD capacity will also be completed by May 15, and this will help us supply water to the 110 villages," Mr. Manohar said.

He added that Cauvery phase 6 will be commissioned in two years.

Water from the borewells will be treated and tested by IISc scientists and then supplied for non-consumption purposes. BHAGYA PRAKASH K.

Deadline extended

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

While 1,530 water tanker owners have registered themselves on the BBMP portal until now, the deadline for registration for the rest has been extended up to March 15, BWSSB Chairman Ram Prasath Manohar said. He added that legal action will be taken against those who fail to register even after that. He said that with the 1,530 registered tankers, 10 MLD water can be supplied at once. He also said that 419 people have voluntarily given their tankers to BWSSB on a rental basis.

BJP to protest tomorrow

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Assembly R. Ashok said the Bharatiya Janata Party will protest in the city on Monday, against "mismanagement of the water crisis in Bengaluru". "The government has failed to rein in water tanker mafia and even in international media there are reports everyday that Bengaluru has gone dry. This will severely hit the city's global image," he said.

Responding to the BJP's protest, Deputy Chief Minister and Bengaluru Development Minister D.K. Shivakumar on Saturday said he was open to suggestions from the Opposition granted they are constructive in nature, in light of the water crisis in Bengaluru.

Two murdered

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Two people, including a rowdy-sheeter, were killed in the city since Friday.

A 30-year-old rowdy-sheeter Shiva was hacked to death allegedly by his rival gang in Anjinappa Garden, Cottonpet, on Friday. The deceased Shiva alias Varthe, who had multiple criminal cases pending against him, was operating in and around K.R. Market and Cottonpet areas, police said. On Friday afternoon, an armed gang attacked Shiva while he was walking in Anjinappa Garden and fled from the scene.

Youth killed over trivial row

In another case, a 23-year-old youth was stabbed to death over a trivial row that erupted during the Shivaratri programme at a temple in Byatarayanapura police station limits on Friday. The deceased Yogesh was dancing in front of the temple and accidentally brushed against another man who were also dancing there. Heated argument ensued between them but others pacified the duo. Enraged by this, the accused followed Yogesh while he was returning home and stabbed him.

Explosion in garage, 4 injured

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Residents of West of Chord Road in Basaveshwara Nagar were shocked after an explosion rocked a car garage at the ground floor of a three-storey residential building on Saturday evening.

The fire suspected to have started from a gas welding machine soon spread to the vehicles causing explosion, the Fire and Emergency Service personnel said.

The owner of the garage identified as George and his assistant Shivu were among the four who sustained injuries. Owing to the impact of the explosion, the window panes and doors of the building shook, which created panic among the residents. A resident who was watching the fire from the opposite building and recording it on his mobile said that initially he thought that it was a small fire but a few seconds later a massive explosion occurred.

Two fire tenders put out the fire before shifting the injured to the hospital.

Initial probe revealed that leakage from the gas welding machine led to the fire.

Music concert 'Swara Lahari' today

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Sapthak, Bengaluru, will present Swara Lahari, a music programme on Sunday. The programme, featuring vocal concert by Manohar Patwardhan and party and Sarod concert by Abhisek Lahiri from Kolkata, will be held at Indian Institute of World Culture on B.P. Wadia Road, Basavanagudi, at 5.30 p.m.

Man held for entering airport with fake ticket

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Security personnel at the Kempegowda International Airport on Friday caught a 24-year-old youth who got into the airport with a forged ticket to send off his female friend.

The accused Prakhar Srivastava from Jharkhand was trying to get out from gate no. 9 when the security personnel stopped him and checked his ticket to find it was forged. Upon questioning, the accused confessed that he had edited the flight ticket to get into the airport.

Based on the complaint by C.P. Meena, security in-charge officer, the airport police booked the accused under trespass, forgery and fraudulently using forged documents against the accused and arrested him.

Letters threatening to bomb Ram temple in Nippani found

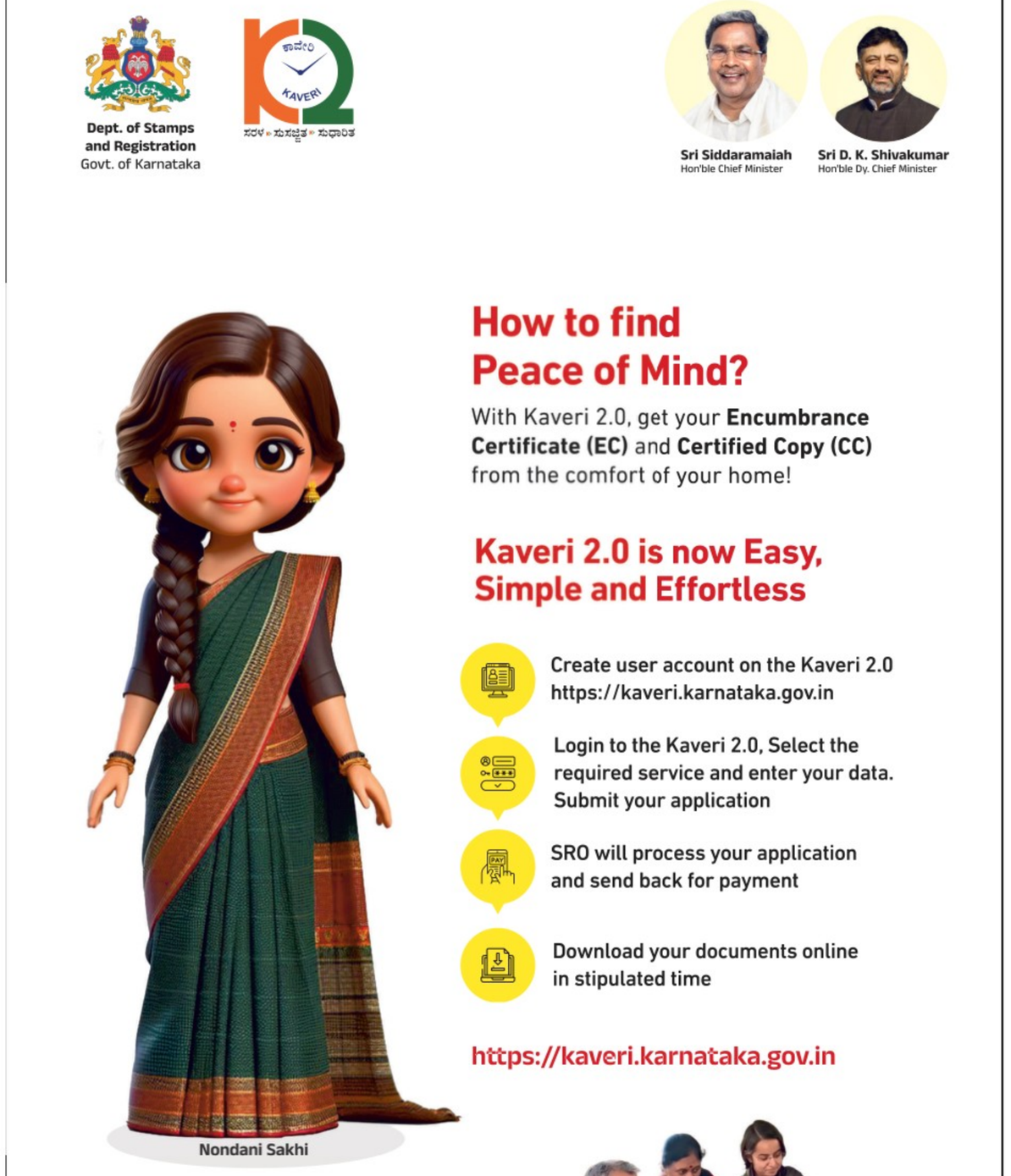
The Hindu Bureau
HUBBALLI

The police have beefed up security around the century-old Sri Ram Temple at Nippani in Belagavi district after the temple management found two letters with a threat to bomb the temple. The issue came to light on Saturday with a section of the media reporting the same. The letters were found last month.

Superintendent of Police of Dharwad Gopal Byakod, who has the additional responsibility of Belagavi district, told *The Hindu* that investigation was on. He said the locals were aware of the issue and the investigation. "There was nothing to panic," he said.

The temple management had received the first letter on Februay 7 and the second on February 28 and following a complaint, the Nippani Station Police registered a case on March 7.

A total of 13 CCTV cameras have been installed in the town to keep vigil.



Sun should become a steadfast ally in agriculture: George

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

"The technological innovations in the solar energy sector will be productive only when they reach the doorsteps of farmers and aid them in agriculture. The country's development will take place only when there is vast research in agriculture which will help farmers," said Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Saturday after inaugurating the Soura Shakti Mela organised on the GKVK campus for farmers.

The Chief Minister also launched the Soura Mitra app which will help streamline the applications of farmers who wish to install solar-powered pump sets. More than 5,000 farmers participated in the mela which aimed to help them adopt solar energy solutions and become self-sufficient and reduce the reliability on conventional electricity for irrigation.

Speaking at the mela, Energy Minister K.J. George said, "In Karnataka, we envision transforming the agricultural landscape where the sun becomes a steadfast ally in powering our fields. Our government is committed to championing initiatives such as the 'Kusum B' project, aimed at incentivising the use of solar-powered pump sets. In a concerted effort to embrace sustainable energy and accelerate the widespread adoption of solar pump sets, the State government has significantly enhanced the subsidy, now standing at an alluring 50%. This move aims to facilitate accessibility for farmers throughout the State." More than 50 solar power product stalls were set up at the mela.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Minister of Energy K.J. George at Soura Shakti Mela on GKVK campus in Bengaluru on Saturday.

Timings
BENGALURU

SUNDAY, MAR. 10		
RISE	06:30	SET 18:30
RISE	06:24	SET 18:37
MONDAY, MAR. 11		
RISE	06:29	SET 18:30
RISE	07:09	SET 19:36
TUESDAY, MAR. 12		
RISE	06:29	SET 18:30
RISE	07:54	SET 20:34

Bengaluru Weather	max	min
Tumakuru	34	23
Mysuru	36	20
Bengaluru	35	21

Bengaluru Today
35°C A dry weather to continue. Morning will be slight cool with mist and haze. Day will be very warm with uneasy afternoon.

Bengaluru Tomorrow
36°C The weather will be dry. Morning will be pleasant with mist and haze. Day will be very warm and uneasy. Night will be pleasant.

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THE HINDU
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Classifieds

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LIFE MADE SIMPLE

THE HINDU

Matrimonial

BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER

BRIDEGROOMS WANTED

COSMOPOLITAN

✔ **HIGH SALARY groom for Christian 33, 153cm, fair bful, MNC, 30LPA, excellencejoy123@gmail.com**

DOCTOR

1984, MBBS (MD / MS.OBG) Hindu, Tamil, Chennai, CNB. Prefer Dr / Civil Service / Business : 9514518555

M.D. DOCTOR Hindu 30/F 175Cms, working as SR. AIIMS, seeks suitable groom (preference Doctor). Whatsapp the details to 9500333303

WANTED PG Doctor or well employed Sr. Executive for a PG Doctor-Surgeon DNB, Hindu Nair malayali girl 37yrs Ashwathy, well employed in a leading hospital in Kerala, Contact Whatsapp 8144140365

MUDALIYAR 26Y, Fair, MBBS (MS), Seeks Doctors or any suitable Groom, Chennai or any district. Ct: Catharin – 7824023030

HINDU NADAR : Girl, Age – 27, MBBS, DCH. Seeks Doctor or any other Rich Groom. Contact : 93635 70731

MD ANESTHESIOLOGY Doctor, 1989 born 165cm fair, beautiful, cultured and homely. Settled in Chennai. Father Doctor Kerala Nair , Mother Tamil CSI. Doctor and Engineer grooms preferred. Ct: 9840050381/ 9840985383

GROOM WANTED
Hindu Reddy
November 90 / 165 cms, Doctor (Surgeon) MBBS, MS, Fair, Slim, Well Settled Seeks Suitable Groom from Chennai. Caste No Bar.
Call: 89256 40111

HINDU NADAR
Chennai, Only Daughter, Fair & Charm Girl, MBBS, MD-Y1, 24/160, Rich Affluent, well-Educated family seeks suitable Good Looking Doctor Groom with clean habits from Hindu Nadar only.
ct: 94447 59246
94449 68235

Muslim Doctor Girl 29/158, MS, Pursuing Mch (Rep.Med.). Seeks Alliance from Doc (DM/Mch/MD/MS) Contact: 9815384288.

MBA / CA / ICWA

36 Years CA Working in Hyd, 5'5" Telugu Vaidiki Brahmin Girl, Family settled in Hyderabad, Artistic, Gifted Sketcher Painter, Issueless Divorcee, No Encumbrances, seeks well Educated, well settled Groom Working in India from affectionate South Indian Veg Families. Reply to pmsvhyd@gmail.com

TAMIL

CSI NADAR, 28/172cm, B.TECH/ MS in Canada, 5 Lakhs per month. Seeks Suitable Groom. Contact: 9380791999

CHRISTIAN BE 35/164cm Handsome BC Girl Working CTS (SWE) in USA H1B Visa seeks good looking groom working with SWE/Doctor in USA. CNB. CT: 81488 25673 Brokers Excuse

ELITE TAMIL Muslim 37 B.E seeks qualified, employed, Never married Tamil Muslim Groom. 9444235779

GROOM WANTED, Pious RC Christian Girl (Caste no bar) 28/5ft 4inch B.Sc. (Biochemistry) DMLT Working, 9443784674, Whatsapp: 00447878127414, Email:msn2024@myyahoo.com

TAMIL

TAMIL VISWAKARMA BRIDEGROOM WANTED

Tamil Viswakarma, age : 25 years, 153 cm, B.Com., fair, daughter of a well renowned industrialist. Looking for a suitable well educated , good looking groom, belonging to an affluent family preferably having own industry or business.

Contact :
+919952884038

TAMIL

ELITE TAMIL Muslim B.E., 23, Seeks Qualified Suitable Groom Contact: 9345148031.

B.TECH (NIT) MBA(IIM) Tamil Girl 30/161 Product Consultant C/R/L No bar Sks suitable edu groom 8220468282

TELUGU BALIJA Naidu 27 yrs/155 cm Barani/Mesham, Completed Phd (Zoo) Feb 2024/Chennai Seeks Dr/Er from Balija naidu only Ct: 9486106465.

48/163 MUDALIAR/PILLAI, M.com, MBA, Seeks Prof Qualified Unmarried Below 50, Clean habits, CNB Ct: 9444837355/ 9500113136 anbumatri@gmail.com

YADAVA GIRL, age 26, B.E. Working in Software Company 9Lac/p.a. seeking Yadava groom. Ct: 9381382000

SEEKING EMPLOYED Groom below 36 years from Elite Family for Divorced 31 years Employed Bride BE & MBA Fair & Homely from SC AD Hindu Elite Family. Cast No Bar. 9483542477

HINDU, 45/170, B.E., Bharani, Chennai, MNC Employed, issueless, Divorcee Seeks Educated, Employed Groom from Good Family Background. Only Hindu Grooms with salary of Above 40k per month. Business not preferred. Ct:72007 57324

VADAMA KOUNDINYA Gothram age 25 5ft 7inch PhD seeking well educated US settled vegetarian nonsmoking teetotaler Iyer age 25 to 28 Email meera9sree@yahoo.com

TAMIL CHETTIAR Girl, 32/155, wheatish, US citizen, working Atlanta seeks Tamil boy 32–34 years working in US. Caste no bar. Ct: 9962956299.

VANNIAKULA KSHATRIYA Hindu Uthiradam 28/168, B.Tech, seeks well settled educated groom preferably in Pondicherry. Contact: 9443659440

HINDU VANNIYAKULA, kshatriya, good looking girl, 33, MS(IIT_M) Ph.D (UK) Working as a Assistant Professor in a Central Institute, Bangalore, Seeks tall, Good Looking Handsome Groom with a Professional Masters / Ph.D from a Good Institution in India / Abroad, Working in a Good Position in Bangalore. Contact No: 94422 20103 / 94871 30103

MUDALIAR 26, BE, MS, 161cm Good Look, Working wellSettled Family Seeks Groom CNB Ct:8778514465/ 7200866346

NAIDU BRIDE SWE Seeking Never Married Tamil / Telugu groom Age (41–44) Working in Chennai or US. Ct: hemapriya.h@gmail.com, 9962805093

GROOM REQUIRED below 41 yrs for a Hindu Nadar Divorcee 36 yrs Engineering getting five digit pay in Govt job. Ct: 94431 56344

HINDU 27, BARANI slim girl, Veg. Father Gowda, Mother Brahmin, MDS Senior lecturer in Dental college Seeks groom from Brahmin/Saiva Pillai. 9842979862.

GROOM WANTED Rich Mudaliyar, 25yrs, BE, MBA, Elite Business Family in Chennai. Ct: 9710093999/ 8939691888

MUDALIYAR DOCTOR MS 33/165 Fair well settled, Chennai seeks qualified, well mannered groom. 9962830417

MAY 94/167 fair SC/PL BE , TCS Chennai, Parents Hindu/CSI. Seeks Groom Dr/Er, Govt Employee. 8056143638

MUDALIAR (300CR): 23/165, Under graduate (Canada), Running educational Institution, Chennai, Elite Family, seeks groom – Business / Doctor – 9962530015

TAMIL

NADAR 33/5'6" MBA working in Chennai Elite Family Seeks qualified Groom working in Cennai. CNB 9962991972

VANNIAR FAIR Girl Uthiram 25/166 M.S. (Engg) Australia. Father S.E. (Retd) TNEB Seek Smart handsome groom with M.S (Engg) Ct : 97894 61060

✔ **HINDU, PARKAVA Kulam, Nathamar Udayar, 31, Doctor. Looking for bridegroom below 36 years, Doctors, Professionals or Premier Institute with clean habits. Ct:9445000864**

VANNIYAR KULA Kshatriya Hindu Avittam 27/158, B.E seeks Well Settled Groom. Contact: 9840028346

HINDU TAMIL Veg 39/165 MS(UK) Divorcee No issues Entrepreneur , Chennai seeks Veg Groom 38–41yrs well settled affluent family. Ct: 9884816309

MUDALIAR 25/162, Fair Beautiful, MBBS,(MD),CMC Hospital, 600000.PA, Affluent Family. 9043987029, 9043991629

VISWAKARMA B.E/M.Plan, 1994 working L&T 65000 PM Seeking Suitable groom. 9841211033 / 9840105941

GROOM WANTED Elite Mudaliyar, 39yrs, LLM, Well Educated background in Chennai. Ct: 9962791888/ 8939691888

IYER, TAMIL bharatwajam, 29 years old, punarpoosam (1), BE. cse, software Engineer in Chennai, girls seeks suitable groom working in Chennai same sect. contact no 9443471837, 9443697371

ELITE IYER girl 23 fair MNC Thiruvathirai seeks grooms below 27 forward details & horoscope to W.app 09445991086

PILLAI / MUDALIAR, 34, MD, Well settled family seeks Groom aged 34 – 36 yrs, Engineer/ Business/ Doctor. Contact: 9345855735

NAIR Girl, Fair, March 1993 B.Sc MBA working - MNC Chennai seeks suitable Educated, Well Settled, Nair Groom below 35years Ph: 94863 71389

Tamil Yadhava, 32/160, Punarpusam Mithunam, BE (CS) SWE workg-MNC 2Lac P.M seeks suitable Professional groom. Ct: 97912 73303 /97909 93279

YADAVA 25/160cms Counselling Psychologist, Fair, Beautiful, Affluent, well Educated Family. Seeks well Qualified, Handsome Groom from similar Family background, decent Salary, preferably Employed in Chennai, Age: 26- 30yrs. CNB. Contac: 7200061922

Hindu, Adidravidar 26years, B.D.S Working. Seeks Suitable Groom MBBS/BDS prefered. Ct:98940 55745.

HINDU SC AD 36yrs B.E, Sr. Software Engineer TCS Chennai seeks Suitable Groom. Contact: 99521 47216

SC, AD Bride 39yrs. BE, MBA. Infosys, New Jersy City, US, Rs.3.LPM, 2nd Marriage Unconsumed Ct:9444275721

Mudaliar Girl 28 Yrs 155 cms 30,000 pm, M.Sc (Maths), Systems Engineer, TCS Chennai seeks Groom Contact: 9445387280.

Hindu Nadar, 32/165cm, very fair, MS. Working in Australia. Pooram, simmam seeks Groom, Eng/Bussiness/ Abroad/ India. CNB. 9944050546/ 9884022345

SC HINDU Adidravida 28/156cm BE MNC 16L PA seeks suitable alliance from Govt, PSU, IT. Ct: 94441 55781

TELUGU

BALIJA NAIDU, 28/152cm, Fair, PG, MNC Chennai Ct: 6380984534/saanvigklr@gmail.com

KAMMA 40 M.Sc Psychology good looking affluent seeks well settled handsome qualified groom. Subsect no bar. 9444410207/ tvm1945@gmail.com

KULALA GIRL 24/154cms BE(Mech) MBA Karthigai Working Bangalore seeks suitable Educated Groom. Whatsapp your profile: 89038-19161.

✔ **NAIDU/45,** UMC, Good Looking, MCA/SW MNC Chennai, Div. seeks suitable groom. Ph. 9087296964

GROOM WANTED Rich Naidu 25yrs MBBS MS Own Hospital in Chennai Elite Business Family 9710093999/ 8939691888

KAMMA BE, MS, USA 1980, Uthiram 163cms seeks BE MS USA Groom. Contact: 99762 54300.

Balija Naidu Very Fair / 168cm / MBA goodlooking bride from well to do family seeks educated cultured business / employed handsome groom from affluent family. Subsect no bar. Contact: 9880715095

Kamma Naidu very fair Beautiful Girl age 25 BBA.LLB(Hons) 167 cm Star Ayilayam Kadagam 9962585430 Mail : chemauxp@gmail.com

WANTED BRIDE Groom of reddy, pokanati, modikallu yr of birth 1995-1996 good job at UK only. Cont 9866099827

NAIDU GIRL, Good Looking 28/165cm Aswini, BE., ME, pursuing PhD Doctoral studies in Satellite Communications Neuromorphic Computing - Europe seeking suitable Groom PhD / MS in IVY League Colleges in USA from good family back ground. Contact: 98401 03686 / bvraj1962@gmail.com

BRIDES WANTED

BUSINESS

AGE 38 Handsome, Comfortable Groom needs VIP Girl and first Marriage, Remarriage, Divorce. Ct: 9597834451

COSMOPOLITAN

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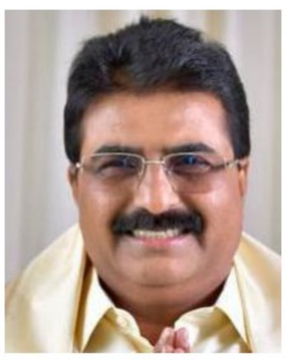
It's a nail-biting suspense over BJP-JD(S) nominee in Mandya

The incumbent MP, Sumalatha Ambareesh, who won as an Independent in 2019 but declared her support to the BJP ahead of the 2023 Assembly elections, is making a strong pitch for the saffron party's ticket

Laiqh A. Khan
MYSURU


Sumalatha Ambareesh, H.D. Kumaraswamy, and Venkatarame Gowda

Suspense over the BJP-JD(S) combine's nominee for the Mandya Lok Sabha constituency continues even as the Congress was relatively quicker off the mark by announcing Venkatarame Gowda, popularly known as 'Star Chandru', as its candidate for the Vokkaliga-dominated constituency.

Incumbent MP Sumalatha Ambareesh, who won as an Independent in 2019 but declared her support to the BJP ahead of the 2023 Assembly elections, is making a strong pitch for the saffron party's ticket. But, the BJP and the JD(S), which have teamed up for the Lok Sabha polls, are yet to finalise their seat-sharing arrangement.

While speculation is rife in political circles that Mandya is likely to be one of the four constituencies to be allocated to the JD(S), neither a formal announcement has been made nor has any clear indication emerged on the choice of the candidate. But, the former Chief Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy or the former Minister C.S. Puttaraju are likely to be chosen as the candidate if the JD(S) bags Mandya during the seat-sharing talk.

Left high and dry

Ms. Ambareesh had clearly not expected to be in the good books of the JD(S) after she defeated Nikhil Kumaraswamy during the 2019 election when the regional party was in alliance with the Congress. After burning bridges with the Congress by aligning with the BJP during the Assembly election last year, Ms. Ambareesh found herself left high and dry when the saffron party joined hands with the JD(S), whose leadership had been repeatedly taking potshots at her style of functioning in Mandya.

Though she has met senior BJP leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi and party national president J.P. Nadda and has been publicly expressing confidence about securing the BJP ticket to contest from Mandya again, she has revealed little about her plan B.

Meanwhile, a section of local leaders of the BJP in Mandya too had expressed their reservations over fielding Ms. Ambareesh. When BJP leaders, including Bharat Shetty, MLA, and the former MLA N. Mahesh visited Mandya as observers earlier this week to gather the opinion of local leaders, many preferred that the party retain Mandya during the seat-sharing talks and field a local partyman, who had built the BJP instead of Ms. Ambareesh, who they pointed out was yet to formally join the party.

Ms. Ambareesh's candidature, however, was supported by the former Minister K.C. Narayana Gowda, a former JD(S) leader from Mandya, who also is uncomfortably with the BJP-JD(S) tie-up.

Off the mark

Meanwhile, Congress candidate Mr. Venkatarame Gowda, who is the brother of Independent MLA representing Gauribidanur H.K. Puttaswamy Gowda, is entering the poll fray for the first time. He had been assured of a ticket long before the formal announcement, after the former MP Ramya had failed to evince interest, and he had started his maiden election campaign.

Out of the eight Assembly segments in the Mandya Lok Sabha constituency, the Congress won six – Maddur, Mandya, Nagamangala, Srirangapatna, Malavalli, and K.R. Nagar – in the 2023 election, while the Sarvodaya Karnataka Party candidate Darshan Puttannaiah, who is supported by the Congress, bagged the Melkote Assembly seat and JD(S) leader H.T. Manju represents K.R. Pet segment.

Shivamogga: Children of former CMs set for a race to Parliament

Sathish G.T.
SHIVAMOGGA

Congress workers welcomed the party's decision to field Geetha Shivarajkumar for the Shivamogga Lok Sabha seat by distributing sweets in Shivamogga on Saturday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The Congress has declared Geetha Shivarajkumar as its candidate for the Shivamogga Lok Sabha constituency. The BJP is expected to field incumbent MP B.Y. Raghavendra for one more term. With that, the children of two former Chief Ministers will be in the contest for the Shivamogga seat.

Earlier contests

Ms. Shivarajkumar, daughter of the former Chief Minister late S. Bangarappa, contested for the seat on the JD(S) ticket in 2014 and lost against the former Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa by a huge margin. Ms. Shivarajkumar stood third after Mr. Yediyurappa and Congress candidate Manjunath Bhandary in that election. Mr. Yediyurappa had won by a margin of 3.63 lakh votes from the nearest rival of the Congress. This time, Ms. Shivarajkumar is likely to face Mr. Yediyurappa's son, Mr. Raghavendra, who has been elected to Parliament three times. Interestingly, Mr. Raghavendra, in his first Lok Sabha election in 2009, had defeated Bangarappa.

In the byelection to the Shivamogga Lok Sabha seat held in 2018, after Mr. Yediyurappa's resignation, Mr. Raghavendra fought against Madhu Bangarappa, Ms. Shivarajkumar's brother who was the candidate of the JD(S)-Congress coalition, and won. Then the victory margin was over 52,000 votes. Both of them fought against each other a year later in 2019 and Mr. Raghavendra won by a margin of over 2.12 lakh votes. After defeating Bangarappa (in 2009) and Mr. Madhu Bangarappa, Mr. Raghavendra will now face Ms. Shivarajkumar.

Family turf

For almost three-decades, these two families have been winning the seat. Bangarappa was elected to Parliament for the first time in 1996 and then in 1999 on the Congress ticket. He joined the BJP and represented the constituency in 2004. Later, he resigned and contested as the Samajwadi Party candidate in the byelection in 2005 and won. Since 2009, the seat has been with Mr. Yediyurappa's family.

Ms. Shivarajkumar's husband and actor Shivarajkumar is expected to campaign extensively during the election. Among the eight Assembly segments in the Shivamogga Lok Sabha constituency, the Congress has won three – Bhadravati, Sagar, and Sorab. The JD(S) has won Shivamogga Rural. The remaining four – Shivamogga, Tirthahalli, Shikaripur, and Byndoor, have been won by the BJP.

Cong. steps on 'guarantee' implementation plank ahead of Lok Sabha election

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The ruling Congress in the State, banking on its implementation of five 'guarantee' schemes to garner votes in the Lok Sabha polls in Karnataka, is holding a series of 'Guarantee Samaveshas'.

These bear a resemblance to *Labharthi* (group of beneficiaries) conventions that the BJP has been holding ahead of elections in several States. Congress leaders have also been contending that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has "stolen" the Congress's idea by using the slogan 'Modi ki guarantee' while constantly mocking its schemes aimed at alleviating the plight of the poor amid price rise.

"Karnataka is at the centre of the Congress' strategy for the parliamentary elections," sources said. More than four crore people have benefited from the successful implementation of guarantee schemes and it is an important poll plank related to life and livelihood to counter the Opposition (BJP and JD-S), he added. The Opposition is expected to focus on issues such as the blast at The Rameshwaram Cafe in Bengaluru recently to make a point about law and order and "minority appeasement".

On Saturday, Revenue Minister Krishna Byre Gowda addressed one such samavesha in Mangaluru where he said the five guarantee schemes of the State government were aimed at returning the taxes collected from people to the people to de-stress life affected by enormous price rise caused by the policies of the Central government. Labour Minister Santosh Lad held another one in Kundagol on Saturday and said the State government had taken every step to ensure guarantee benefits reach every household. Similar conventions are being held in Mandya on Sunday and Chamarajanagar on Monday, which are scheduled to be attended by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah.

The party has already held divisional-level conventions on the five guarantees in Kalaburagi, Shivammoga, Mangaluru, and Channapatna. It has decided to hold taluk, Assembly, and district-level conventions, largely focusing on guarantees.

The government will constitute three-level committees – State, district, and constituency – for monitoring the implementation of five guarantees, Anna Bhagya, Shree Shakti, Gruha Jyothi, Gruha Lakshmi, and Yuva Nidhi.

'Congress Ministers, MLAs have to enter LS poll fray if high command instructs'

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Dinesh Gundu Rao

Ministers and legislators of the Congress have to obey the party high command's decisions and contest the Lok Sabha elections if instructed to enter the poll fray, Minister for Health and Family Welfare Dinesh Gundu Rao has said.

Mr. Rao told reporters in Bengaluru on Saturday that the party, which released its first list on Friday, would release its list in two or three phases. "We are ready to fight the elections. We have to obey the high command's decisions and contest elections... All Ministers, MLAs, and MLCs have to fight elections if the high command instructs," the Minister said.

Sources in the party said that many Ministers have distanced themselves from contesting the general elections and shown interest to field their sons or daughters if the party's central leaders agreed.

On Dr. Manjunath

The Minister said that the Congress does not fear any BJP and JD(S) candidate in the parliamentary elections and was ready to face Dr. C.N. Manjunath, cardiologist, in Bengaluru Rural constituency if he is fielded. Dr. Manjunath recently retired after a long service at the Sri Jayadeva Institute of Cardiovascular Sciences and Research, Bengaluru. He is the son-in-law of JD(S) supremo H.D. Deve Gowda. The Congress has fielded D.K. Suresh from the Bengaluru Rural constituency. Speculation is about whether Dr. Manjunath will be fielded from Bengaluru Rural or on the BJP ticket from Bengaluru North constituency.

"Let the BJP field Dr. Manjunath. We will politically fight against the BJP. We are not scared of the BJP-JD(S) alliance candidate... Dr. Manjunath was allowed to continue as head of the hospital earlier when Siddaramaiah was the Chief Minister," Mr. Rao said. In reply to a question on Mr. Deve Gowda saying that his son-in-law should not enter the "dirty and polluted politics", Mr. Rao shot back and asked, "Does it mean that [Mr. Deve Gowda's sons] the former Chief Minister and JD(S) leader H.D. Kumaraswamy and the former Minister H.D. Revanna are in polluted politics?"

NK to get big chunk of investments in 'Beyond Bengaluru' push

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The State government has approved six new projects and eight additional investment proposals worth ₹17,835.9 crore. An investment of ₹10,433.72 crore, a major chunk of the total projects announced, would be captured by Vijayapura, Kalaburagi, Ballari, and Belagavi districts of North Karnataka. The State government has been constantly pushing 'Beyond Bengaluru' to decongest the State capital and also to trigger economic growth across the State.

These business proposals, expected to create 27,000 jobs across Karnataka, were cleared by the 63rd State High-Level Clearance Committee (SHLCC), headed by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, on Friday.

Wistron proposal

The SHLCC received a nod for six new projects worth ₹8,220.05 crore, and eight additional investment projects worth ₹9,615.85 crore. The committee also approved Wistron's proposal involving an investment of ₹2,095 crore that is expected to generate 21,723 jobs in the State. Other large proposals cleared by the government included a ₹1,750-crore MRO project by Air India Ltd., STT Global Data Centres India Pvt. Ltd. (₹1,352.3 crore), Indian Cane Power Ltd. (₹1,078 crore), and ICT Service Management Solutions which announced an investment of ₹1,450 crore.

KARNATAKA GOVERNMENT STOCK (SECURITIES)
Finance Department
Vidhana Soudha, Bengaluru.

1. Aggregate Amount: **Total Rs.6000 Crore, ((Rs.1000 Crore-10 Year Tenure) (Rs.3000 Crore-13 Year Tenure) and (Rs.2000 Crore -14 Year Tenure))**
2. Method of Issue : By auction, through PDO, RBI, Mumbai (Fort).
3. Date of Auction : **March 12, 2024.**

Government of Karnataka invites subscription to the above securities. Copies of the Notification and Application forms may be obtained from PDO, RBI, Bengaluru. Non-competitive bidding facility has been introduced by RBI to encourage participation of retail investors. The Government stock up to 10% of the notified amount of the sale will be allotted to eligible individuals and institutions. Sample Tender Forms and the revised scheme of Non-competitive bidding facility is available on the website **www.rbi.org.in**

Sd/- (Dr. P. C. Jaffer)
Secretary to Government
(Budget & Resources), Finance Department

DIPR/CP/RO/4108/2023-24

Yediyurappa to attend poll meeting today

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The former Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa on Saturday said a clear picture on the party's candidates for the Lok Sabha election in Karnataka would emerge on Sunday after the BJP election committee meeting. The BJP has not yet announced its candidates in the State, while the Congress on Friday came out with seven names.

"I am going to Delhi tomorrow. Tomorrow evening there is an election committee meeting. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will also take part in it. Already, one round of talks has taken place with Union Home Minister Amit Shah and BJP president J.P. Nadda. Tomorrow we can get a clear picture," Mr. Yediyurappa told reporters here.

High Court imposes ₹2 lakh cost on bank

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The bank had argued that it will return documents of a mortgaged property only to the original borrower knowing well that he is dead

The High Court of Karnataka imposed a cost of ₹2 lakh on a public sector bank for insisting that it would return documents of a mortgaged property only to the original borrower, who is dead, even after accepting the loan amount from the borrower's 85-year-old father, who voluntarily came forward and repaid his deceased son's debt.

Justice M. Nagaprasanna passed the order while allowing a petition filed by Embee Agro Food Industries Pvt. Ltd., represented by its director, M.B. Somashekhar Gowda, 85, of Hanagawadi Industrial Area in Harihar talk of Davangere. "The original borrower, the son of the present petitioner, is no more. He died by suicide. The bank is aware of it. The bank offers a one-time settlement (OTS) scheme to the present petitioner [father of the original borrower] which is on account of the death of his son. However, the bank now wants to return the documents to the original borrower, who is no more. It is this action of the bank that shocks the conscience of the court," the judge observed in the order.

This attitude of the bank, the court said, "Which is akin to the attitude of a cantankerous private lender cannot be countenanced, that too after receiving the entire amount." The court described the bank's action, "knowing fully well that the original borrower, the son, is no more" as "beyond comprehension and rather strange" and "preposterous".

Background of case

Animesh Gowda M.S., who was the managing director of the company, had borrowed the loan from Canara Bank. However, he ended his life after being unable to repay the mounting debt.

Following this, the borrower's father, who became the proprietor of the company, came forward to repay the loan after the death of his son, and the bank offered the father with the OTS scheme asking him to pay ₹19.75 crore within 90 days.

However, the father could repay only ₹9.35 core by February 2023, and in March 2023 sought an extension of time to repay the remaining amount. The father was compelled to knock on the doors of the courts as the bank, instead of extending time, initiated steps to take possession of the mortgaged property.

Court grants time

The court, taking note of petitioner-father's *bona fides*, granted three more months to repay the remaining amount. The bank unsuccessfully challenged this order before a Division Bench, and by then he had repaid the entire amount and also offered to pay the interest amount and legal expenses for the delayed period.

The bank, after accepting the entire amount as demanded by it from the father, began to dodge his request to return the documents of the property even though he had cleared all dues by December 31, 2023.

The bank's counsel told the court in February 2024 that documents could be returned "only to the original owner". However, after being pulled up by the court, the bank agreed to return the documents to the father.

Criticising this conduct of the bank, the court directed the bank to return the documents to the petitioner-father with ₹2 lakh as cost.

DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM
Government of Uttar Pradesh
UTTAR PRADESH TOURISM
U.P. nahi dekha, toh India nahi dekha.

Paryatan Bhawan, C-13, Vipin Khand, Gomti Nagar, Lucknow - 226010
Email Id: ppp.uptourism@gmail.com

Request for Proposal (RFP) for Tourism Gap Analysis, Survey of Locations, Identification Shelf of Projects and Propose Implementation and Marketing Strategies - for 12 Mega Circuits each - Ramayana, Krishna-Braj, Buddhist Circuit; Mahabharata Circuit; Shakti Peeth Circuit; Adhyatmik Circuit; Sufi-Kabir Circuit; Jain Circuit; Bundelkhand Circuit; Wildlife and Eco Tourism Circuit; Craft Circuit; and the Swatantrata Sangram Circuit

Online e-bids are invited from the interested bidders, starting from **9th March 2024; 1200 hrs** for TOURISM GAP ANALYSIS, SURVEY OF LOCATIONS, IDENTIFICATION SHELF OF PROJECTS AND PROPOSE IMPLEMENTATION AND MARKETING STRATEGIES' - separate bids for all 12 circuits Pre-bid meeting for all the circuits will be organized jointly on 15/03/2024; 12:00 PM at Paryatan Bhawan, Lucknow.**Last date of submission of e-bids is 30/03/2024; 18:00 PM.** RFP documents are available on the e-tender website https://etender.up.nic.in. The Department of Tourism, Government of Uttar Pradesh reserves the right to cancel any or all the e-bids or annul the bidding process without assigning any reason thereof.

(Director General Tourism)

TDP, BJP, JSP hope to recreate their magic

JSP chief Pawan Kalyan is reportedly the driving factor in bringing the BJP and TDP together again; TDP leaders hope that allying with the party in power at the Centre will ensure a free and fair election in the State; all the three parties had lost miserably in the 2019 Assembly election

NEWS ANALYSIS

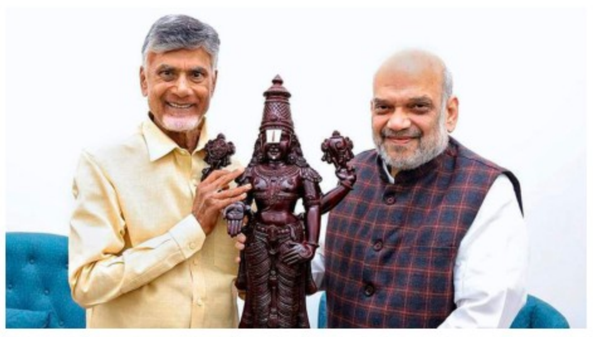
Sumit Bhattacharjee
VISAKHAPATNAM

The Andhra Pradesh political dream team of 2014 – which fell apart with disastrous consequences for all three partners in 2019 – is back together again. Despite the BJP's lack of enthusiasm for the partnership this time round, the TDP's fear of a backlash from an electorate unhappy with the BJP-led Union government, and the unknown strength of the YSR Congress party, the trio is hoping to recreate its electoral magic of a decade ago.

In 2014, the alliance of the BJP and Telugu Desam Party – with outside support from Pawan Kalyan's Jana Sena Party – won the favour of the electorate.

Just before the 2019 elections, the TDP severed ties with the BJP, alleging that the NDA government had failed to give Special Category Status to Andhra Pradesh. The TDP lost miserably to YSR Congress.

Now, six years after that debacle, the combination is back in the reckoning.



Telugu Desam Party president N. Chandrababu Naidu meets Union Home Minister Amit Shah in New Delhi on Thursday. ANI

Reluctant partners

Though Mr. Kalyan had announced his alliance with the TDP in September last year, when Mr. Naidu was in judicial custody related to his alleged involvement in the A.P. Skill Development scam, it took some time for the BJP to join in.

The formal alliance has been crafted after a series of meetings with the BJP's top brass, earlier this year and on March 7 and 8. However, the modalities of seat-sharing and other details are yet to be made public.

As per sources, though the BJP was not very keen to tie up with TDP this time, it was Mr. Kalyan's efforts that paved the way for the alliance. The JSP chief has been harping on the need for the alliance, to avoid the splitting of anti-YSRCP votes. Moreover, for the BJP, some tie-up was necessary to keep a check on the resurgent Congress, which is now being led by Y.S. Sharmila in the State.

However, questions remain on whether the alliance will be able to repeat its 2014 performance.

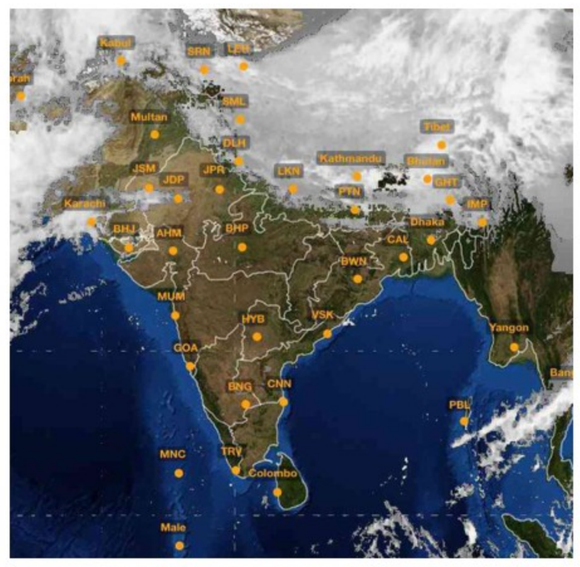
Many political pundits say that the TDP and JSP may face a backlash for tying up with the BJP, as there is a lot of resentment against the BJP in the State. The people of Andhra Pradesh are upset with the BJP-led Union government for privatising the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant, failing to operationalise the sanctioned railway zone, and refusing to sanction Special Category Status for the State.

According to senior TDP leaders, the biggest benefit of the alliance is the assurance it provides for a free and fair election in the State.

"We are confident that Jagan Reddy will use all his might to use the State's official machinery to make the election work in his favour. They were successful in 2019. But now, once the alliance is sealed, it will be difficult for [Mr. Reddy] or his party leaders to turn the electioneering in their favour," a TDP leader said.

WEATHERWATCH

Rainfall, temperature & air quality in select metros yesterday



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 18.00 HRS)

Forecast for Sunday: Thunderstorm accompanied with lightning likely at isolated places over coastal Andhra Pradesh and Yanam

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	—	29.9	13.5	Kozhikode	—	36.1	26.4
Ahmedabad	—	33.5	15.8	Kurnool	—	39.7	26.7
Aizawl	—	27.6	10.6	Lucknow	—	28.5	12.5
Allahabad	—	30.5	12.8	Madurai	—	37.7	24.5
Bengaluru	—	35.1	23.3	Mangaluru	—	33.2	23.6
Bhopal	—	31.8	14.8	Mumbai	—	35.2	20.0
Bhubaneswar	—	33.2	20.0	Mysuru	—	35.0	22.0
Chandigarh	—	25.4	11.2	New Delhi	—	26.9	10.0
Chennai	—	33.1	26.2	Patna	—	28.7	16.6
Coimbatore	—	37.2	22.7	Port Blair	—	30.9	22.1
Dehradun	—	27.7	9.9	Puducherry	—	33.0	25.0
Gangtok	—	16.4	10.1	Pune	—	36.1	18.1
Goa	—	32.4	21.5	Raipur	—	35.0	20.5
Guwahati	—	31.0	13.2	Ranchi	—	28.0	16.4
Hubballi	—	38.0	22.0	Shillong	—	19.4	7.9
Hyderabad	—	35.6	23.5	Shimla	—	18.0	7.5
Imphal	—	27.7	8.3	Srinagar	—	17.6	-0.2
Jaipur	—	28.6	15.1	Thiruvananthapuram	—	35.0	25.5
Kochi	—	32.0	27.2	Tiruchi	—	37.9	24.6
Kohima	—	22.6	10.4	Vijayawada	—	35.5	24.0
Kolkata	—	30.4	18.9	Visakhapatnam	—	34.0	26.8

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO_2	NO_2	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	.14	.46	.43	83	152	
Bengaluru	.11	.34	.43	286	158	
Chennai	.11	.14	.91	104	91	
Delhi	.19	.49	.44	252	162	
Hyderabad	.31	.16	.47	97	109	
Kolkata	.18	.93	.28	147	130	
Lucknow	6	.34	.29	71	102	
Mumbai	—	.65	.16	238	148	
Pune	.85	109	114	77	86	
Visakhapatnam	.12	.19	.17	62	75	

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Mandi Gobindgarh, Punjab recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 324 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh recorded a healthy AQI score of 24

Air Quality Code: Poor | Moderate | Good (Readings indicate average AQI)

SO_2: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO_2: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

PM2.5 & PM10: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

INBRIEF

15 injured as floating bridge on Varkala beach collapses

Hardly two-and-a-half months after the inauguration of a floating bridge at Papanasam Beach, near Varkala, in Thiruvananthapuram, a portion of it collapsed on Saturday. At least 15 people, including women and children, were injured in the accident, the police said. Of the injured, the condition of two is said to be critical as per initial reports, said the police. According to the police, the handrail of the bridge broke in the strong waves around 5.30 p.m.

Vivekananda murder case: approver's father attacked

Shaik Hajivali, father of Shaik Dastagiri, the accused-turned-approver in the Y.S. Vivekananda Reddy murder case, was attacked by unidentified miscreants around midnight at Pulivendula in Kadapa district on Friday. Mr. Hajivali was returning home from Namalagundu, where some miscreants accosted and attacked him, reportedly without any provocation. As Mr. Hajivali sustained injuries, he was rushed to a private hospital for treatment. Mr. Dastagiri filed a complaint at the Pulivendula police station on the incident.

Kaleshwaram project: NDSA unhappy with engineers

The six-member team of the National Dam Safety Authority (NDSA), led by former Chairman of the Central Water Commission J. Chandrashekhar Iyer, has expressed dismay over the 'non-cooperation' in sharing information by some engineers and officials of the Kaleshwaram lift irrigation project. After a preliminary inspection and study of the sinking of piers on Medigadda Barrage and other damage, the team returned to Hyderabad and held a meeting.

Bengaluru cafe blast suspect trail takes NIA officials to Kalaburagi

The Hindu Bureau
KALABURAGI/BENGALURU

Following the trail of the suspected bomber at The Rameshwaram Cafe in Bengaluru on March 1, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) teams reached Kalaburagi on Saturday. The NIA has now got a clear lead that the suspect boarded a KSRTC non-AC sleeper bus to Kalaburagi from Ballari on the night of March 1.

Meanwhile, the NIA has released new images of the suspect – more CCTV grabs from the night of March 1. However, the agency has not revealed where these CCTV grabs were from. "The NIA seeks citizen cooperation in identifying the suspect linked to the cafe blast. Call 08029510900, 8904241100 or email to *info.blr.nia@gov.in* with any information. Your identity will remain confidential," NIA posted on X on Saturday.

CCTV footage of the suspect

The last known location of the suspect was Ballari where he got down a KSRTC bus on the night of March 1, prompting the NIA to probe his possible links to the Islamic State (IS)-inspired terror module the agency unearthed in December 2023 in Ballari. NIA has taken custody of four suspects in the case.

However, NIA officials have now noticed that the suspect had then boarded a non-AC sleeper bus going to Kalaburagi on the same night at 10.15 p.m. Even as they have collected CCTV footage from the bus station and railway station in Kalaburagi, NIA sleuths also got primary information from the conductor and driver of the bus on which the suspect had travelled. The bus crew informed them that two passengers who had not reserved tickets travelled in the bus (KA32 F1885) on the night.

Shivaratri finale

People take a dip in sea off RK Beach in Visakhapatnam, after night-long prayers on the occasion of Maha Shivaratri on Saturday. K.R. DEEPAK

Brother of ex- Cong. corporator killed

The Hindu Bureau
MYSURU

Akmal Pasha, 44, the brother of former Congress corporator Ayaz Pasha, was hacked to death near Nimra Mosque in Rajiv Nagar by unidentified persons while he was travelling on his two-wheeler around 8.30 p.m. on Friday. Though he was shifted to a hospital by the locals, the doctors declared him brought dead.

City Police Commissioner Ramesh B. said an FIR had been registered by Udayagiri police based on a complaint and three suspects had been taken to the police station for interrogation.

Police said Akmal Pasha was a ward-level leader of the SDPI. Recently, he issued a video statement on social media about the unauthorised display of flex boards and other publicity material during the visit to Mysuru of the recently appointed Chairman of Karnataka State Minorities Development Corporation Altaf Khan. The deceased had complained to the Mysuru City Corporation and got the unauthorised publicity material removed.

Mr. Ramesh said the police investigation was still underway. Though the police have learned that the victim was active on social media, an investigation is continuing over other aspects including threats, if any, he was facing.

Students showcase their creativity at 'Futurescapes' painting competition

Sudhindr A.B.
BENGALURU

The regional final of the JSW Paints Futurescapes Painting Competition, in association with The Hindu Young World, was held at St. Joseph's Boys' High School (SJBHS), Museum Road, on Saturday.

The event was held in three categories - Sub-Junior (classes 3 to 5), Junior (classes 6 to 8) and Senior (classes 9 to 12). The qualifiers were given three topics on the spot to paint their imagination and creativity.

School students participating in the JSW Paints 'Futurescapes' painting competition organised by *The Hindu Young World*, in Bengaluru on Saturday. K. MURALI KUMAR

Sub-junior category

Naira Poddar, a student of Sherwood High, won the first prize. The class 5 student chose 'Caring for our animal friends'. "I am happy that I won first prize, I was really nervous when they were announcing the names. We should care and save animals," said Naira. Satvika Shankar from Greenwood High, Bannerghatta Road, won the second prize. Nidhi Krishna from Auden School, Hosakerehalli, bagged third prize.

Junior category

Sumant N., a class 7 student from BVM Global, bagged the first prize. He chose the topic 'Happy eco future.' "Future is important. No need to complicate it and it should be simple," he said.

Sonikumari R., from Indiranagar Nursery and Primary School, won the second prize. Keerthana N., from Triveni Public School bagged the third prize.

Senior category

Shreya Chakravorty, a student of class 12 from Delhi Public School, Bangalore East, bagged the first prize. She chose the topic 'My imaginary friends'. "I am flattered, and I am excited. I was nervous that I would not be able to finish the competition in time. I was a lonely child, I faced many difficulties, and I used to imagine that I had many friends," she said.

The toppers in each category received trophies, merit certificates, and special certificates, at the JSW Paints 'Futurescapes' painting competition organised by *The Hindu Young World* in Bengaluru on Saturday. K. MURALI KUMAR

Devayani Deepak Bhonsle and Sharon Joyce Prem, both from Greenwood High, Bannerghatta Road, bagged the second and third prizes respectively.

The toppers in each category received trophies, merit certificates and special certificates. They have now qualified for the national finale, which will be held virtually. Other winners received trophies and merit certificates.

Babu Jattakar and V.R.C. Shekar, both former senior faculty of Karnataka Chitrakala Parishath, were the judges at the event.

Prize distribution

Fr. Vishal D'Souza, primary administrator and financial officer, St. Joseph's Boys' High School (SJBHS), was the special guest at the prize distribution event. He, along with the judges, distributed the prizes to the winners. "Art is the soul's way of speaking when words fall short. Creativity, its eloquent language, paints the canvas of possibility, transcending boundaries and giving life to the unseen," Fr. Vishal said. At the school-level event, 11,000 students from 43 schools participated.

Consolation prize

Sub-junior: Aditi Padhy; Srinika Sai Palani Mungi; Jagrav C Kumar; Nidhi Navin; B Aboorva Subha Reddy; Varun K; Hemavarshini C.M.

Junior: Vijayakumari; Subiksha E; Akshara Srickant; Mohith Gowda H; Disha P.; Ishika Daga; Ananya Singhal.

Senior: Dhanya Guruprasad; G Bhoomika; Nandana Nair; Shriyaditha V; Noore Saba; Jeremiah C Joji; Nikhil D.

From Page One

Arun Goel quits as EC ahead of polls

Earlier, the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR), an NGO, had filed a public interest litigation petition in the Supreme Court challenging Mr. Goel's appointment claiming that due procedure had not been followed. The top court had refused to interfere with the appointment stating that a Constitution Bench had already examined the process and refrained from passing any adverse orders.

On Saturday, ADR chairman Trilochan Shastry told The Hindu: "We are happy that he has resigned." The current vacancies in the EC would have to be filled in accordance with the new Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023, which was brought in by the government in December last year.

The Act provisions that a selection committee headed by the Prime Minister, which comprises the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha and a PM-nominated Union Minister, will select the members of the commission.

The last Election Commissioner to resign in the recent past was Ashok Lavasa who quit in 2020 to join the Philippines-based Asian Development Bank (ADB).

Drug racket case: NCB arrests film producer

The NCB Deputy Director-General said Mr. Sadiq had invested his proceeds from the illegal drug business in real estate, hospitality, and film production. He added that interrogation of the accused had revealed that the ill-gotten money was used to fund Tamil movie *Mangai*, and to construct a hotel in Chennai. Mr. Sadiq's drug network is spread across the globe, from Delhi to Tamil Nadu and other places in India, as well as to New Zealand, Australia, and Malaysia.

The joint team recovered more than 50 kg of pseudoephedrine and arrested three operatives of the cartel. Over the past three years, the cartel had smuggled out 45 consignments weighing about 3,500 kg of pseudoephedrine, valued at nearly ₹2,000 crore in the international market.

Major blow to Cong. in M.P. as senior leaders join BJP

Former Union Minister Suresh Pachouri says he opposes Congress's tilt towards caste-based politics and approach to the Ayodhya Ram Mandir issue; former MP and 4 former MLAs also switch sides

Mehul Malpani
BHOPAL

Former Union Minister Suresh Pachouri, along with other Congress leaders in Madhya Pradesh, switched loyalties to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Saturday, dealing the Congress a major blow ahead of the Lok Sabha election.

Those who quit the Congress and joined the BJP include: Gajendra Singh Rajukhedi, the former Lok Sabha MP from Dhar; former MLAs Sanjay Shukla of Indore-1; Vishal Patel of Indore's Depalpur; and Arjun Paliya of Narmadapuram's Pipariya constituency.

The development comes at a time when the Congress is deliberating on its candidate selection for the Lok Sabha election. The BJP has already announced names for 24 out of 29 seats in the State.

Notably, Dhar and Indore are among the five remaining constituencies where the BJP is yet to name its candidates.

Mr. Pachouri, 71, a four time Rajya Sabha MP and a prominent Brahmin face in the State Congress, has also been a Union Minister of State in the governments of former Prime Ministers P.V. Narasimha Rao, and Manmohan Singh, in prominent Ministries such as Defence and Parliamentary Affairs.

He was also the State party president from 2008 to 2011, and was considered close to the Gandhi family.

After his induction into the BJP at the party's State headquarters, Mr. Pahcouri hit out at the Congress, accusing the party of indulging in caste-based politics. "After Independence, there was a tradition in the Congress that we will establish a caste-less and class-less society. But today, we are talking on caste lines. This is increasing friction among caste groups," he said.

Switching sides: Madhya Pradesh CM Mohan Yadav with Suresh Pachouri as the latter joins BJP, in Bhopal on Saturday. A.M. FARUQUI

Sidelines sentiments

He also referred to a Congress slogan from the 1980s – *Na jaat par na paat par, Indira ji ki baat par, muhar lagegi haath par* (Neither on caste nor on class, but the votes will be cast for the Congress's 'hand' poll symbol on the word of then-PM Indira Gandhi) – and alleged that such sentiments had been sidelined in the party now.

Congress leader and former party president Rahul Gandhi has been actively advocating for a nationwide caste census, claiming that it would help give proper representation for underprivileged communities.

Mr. Pachouri also slammed the Congress's decision to skip the Ayodhya Ram Mandir consecration ceremony and its alleged questioning of the armed forces. "I have been the [Minister of State for] Defence and there were never questions raised or evidence demanded about the Army's valour," he said.

Former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, who was among the senior BJP leaders who welcomed Mr. Pachouri into the party, said that he had joined the BJP "without any condition".

Over the past two months, a significant number of Congress leaders in the State have jumped over to the saffron party.

Odisha BJP leaders feign ignorance on tie-up talks with BJD

Satyasundar Barik
BHUBANESWAR

The talks regarding a formal alliance between the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) seem to have stalled, with two senior leaders from the saffron party publicly stating their lack of awareness about any such negotiations.

A day after State BJP president Manmohan Samal said he had no information about discussion on alliance, Vijaypal Singh Tomar, co-in charge of Odisha unit of the BJP, on Saturday said, "As per our knowledge, we are busy preparing to fight elections in all seats. If any alliance is happening, we should be consulted first. As of now, there is no such development on this."

"In New Delhi, we discussed with the State leadership about fight elections in all seats. We are confident of winning more than 89 out of 147 seats in Assembly and 16 Lok Sabha seats in Odisha," Mr. Tomar said.

When asked if negotiations on the alliance were in an advanced stage, the senior BJP leader said, "I have no information regarding it. Please ask the persons who are spreading news about the alliance."

Mr. Tomar said he was ignorant about two key BJD leaders meeting the BJP's top leadership in New Delhi to take the alliance negotiation forward.

On return from New Delhi on Friday evening, the State BJP president said, "We will form government in Odisha and at Centre by winning 400 Lok Sabha seats in the country. This was what had been discussed in New Delhi."

For a week now, there have been hectic discussions about a potential alliance between the BJP and the BJD. Many key leaders of the regional party had recently met at the residence of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik to discuss the pros and cons of the alliance in detail.

After the meeting, Debi Prasad Mishra, senior vice president of the BJD, confirmed about discussion on alliance. Mr. Mishra also issued a statement saying the BJD would do whatever was required to be done to protect interests of Odisha. However, the talks have slowed down due to last minute disagreements.

Congress compromised India's border security: PM

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday slammed the Congress party for ignoring the border villages in Arunachal Pradesh for six decades because it did not find the frontier State worth investing in.

Ahead of the simultaneous Lok Sabha and Assembly elections in the State, he alleged that the Congress indulged in corruption and compromised the country's border security for 60 years.

Inaugurating the Sela Tunnel at 13,000 feet above the mean sea level, the Prime Minister said the vital passage making the road to Tawang accessible throughout the year could have been built a long time ago. "But the Congress mindset was that Arunachal Pradesh has only one-two seats and therefore, there is no point in investing in the State," he told a gathering in Itanagar.

The Prime Minister also visited the Kaziranga National Park and unveiled the statue of Ahom general Lachit Borphukan in Jorhat district of Assam.

Apart from the ₹825-crore Sela Tunnel, he inaugurated and laid the foundation stones for various projects worth ₹55,600 crore in Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Sikkim, and Tripura.

He also launched the ₹10,000-crore Uttar Poorva Transformative Industrialisation Scheme, an industrial development programme for the north-east, and initiated the Dibang Multipurpose Hydropower Project in Arunachal Pradesh's Lower Dibang Valley district. This project will be the highest dam structure in India.

DMK allots nine seats to Congress in T.N.

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

The Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) on Saturday sealed a seat-sharing pact with the Tamil Nadu unit of the Congress, which was allotted 10 seats – nine in Tamil Nadu and a lone seat in Puducherry.

The agreement for the upcoming Lok Sabha election was signed by DMK president and Chief Minister M.K. Stalin and Tamil Nadu Congress Committee (TNCC) president K. Selvaperunthagai at Anna Arivalayam here.

Meanwhile, the DMK also sealed the pact with Kamal Haasan's Makkal Needhi Maiam (MNM) and allocated one Rajya Sabha seat to it. As per the pact, the MNM will work for the DMK-led alliance for the upcoming Lok Sabha election in T.N. and Puducherry. Talking to presspersons after signing the agreement with Mr. Stalin, Mr. Selvaperunthagai said, "Congress leaders will campaign for the victory of all the candidates of DMK and other alliance partners much like how they work for the victory of Congress candidates."

Asked about constituencies the party expected to contest, both Mr. Selvaperunthagai and AICC general secretary K.C. Venugopal said it would be discussed later.

Congress, Trinamool express 'deep concern' after Goel resigns as EC

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Saturday expressed "deep concern" over Election Commissioner Arun Goel's resignation and said if the "systematic decimation" of independent institutions is not stopped then democracy shall be usurped by dictatorship.

Mr. Goel resigned on Saturday, days before the expected announcement of the schedule for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. His tenure was till December 5, 2027, and he would have become Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) after incumbent Rajiv Kumar retired in February next year.

In a post on X, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said, "Election Commission or Election OMISSION? India now has only one Election Commissioner, even as Lok Sabha elections are to be announced in few days. Why?" The EC will now be among the last Constitutional institutions to fall, Mr. Kharge said.

'Concerning' situation

Meanwhile, Trinamool Congress MP Saket Gokhale said it was concerning that two appointments in the three-member EC panel are to be made ahead of the general elections.

"Modi Govt has introduced a new law where Election Commissioners will now be appointed with a majority vote of PM Modi & one Minister chosen by him," he said, referring to The Chief Election Commissioner And Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service And Term of Office) Act.

(With inputs from PTI)

Rahul emphasises social justice while crossing tribal pockets of Gujarat

The Hindu Bureau
AHMEDABAD

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi-led Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra is passing through tribal pockets of central and south Gujarat. On Saturday, the yatra traversed through pockets Chhota Udepura; Bharuch and Narmada districts where thousands of workers of Congress and AAP joined the march.

The former Congress president addressed a congregation of social workers in Narmada District, highlighting the journey's focus on social justice and dialogue and social welfare of Dalits, OBCs, tribal people and other backward communities.

Mr. Gandhi also met AAP legislator Chaitar Vasava who has been given the Bharuch Lok Sabha seat from where he is taking on the BJP's senior-most parliamentarian Mansukh Vasava.

In Narmada district's Kuvarpara, Mr. Gandhi had a forty-minute long interaction with about 70 civil society leaders working in the Dalit, Adivasi, and Kisan movements in the State.

"The activists highlighted the fact that some Adivasi communities in Gujarat face multiple dislocations, often being evicted without adequate compensation and rehabilitation. The activists also spoke about how the housing market in different parts of the State is getting segregated caste-wise, and how minorities have become increasingly more vulnerable over the last twenty years," Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said in a post on social media platform X.

Public address: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi during his Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra in Netrang, Bharuch on Saturday. X/JAIRAM_RAMESH

Cong. releases '*Nyay Geet*' on 'five pillars of justice'

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Ahead of the Lok Sabha elections, the Congress on Saturday released '*Nyay Geet*', a two-minute and 34-second-long video, which talks about the party's "five pillars of justice" and its "guarantees".

Former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi and several other leaders shared the video of the song on social media. The five pillars of justice promised by the Congress during the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra are – justice for youth, women, farmers, workers, and participatory justice.

PM arrives in Varanasi, takes out roadshow

The Hindu Bureau
LUCKNOW

Prime Minister Narendra Modi received a rousing welcome on Saturday in his Lok Sabha constituency of Varanasi, with thousands of BJP leaders and supporters flooding the roads of the town.

Mr. Modi, who is on his first visit to Varanasi after being renominated as the BJP candidate from the seat for the 2024 Lok Sabha poll, prayed at the Kashi Vishwanath temple and held a roadshow from the airport to the temple.

Mr. Modi is slated to participate in a public programme on March 10 in Azamgarh, where he will inaugurate and lay foundation stones for multiple development projects worth over ₹42,000 crore in Uttar Pradesh.

'Don't declare LS election schedule till SBI disclosure'

Former civil servants write to EC saying that announcement be made only after data is furnished

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Days after the State Bank of India (SBI) sought an extension from the Supreme Court to submit data on electoral bonds, a group of former civil servants on Saturday asked the Election Commission (EC) not to announce the schedule for Lok Sabha polls till the bank shares the information as mandated by the top court.

The former bureaucrats, under the banner of the Constitutional Conduct Group (CCG), said that SBI should give the electoral bonds data much before the announcement of the general election.

The Supreme Court had on February 15 scrapped the electoral bonds scheme. It had also directed SBI to furnish data regarding the electoral bonds to the Election Commission by March 6. The public sector bank had on March 4 moved the Supreme Court seeking an extension of time till June 30 to disclose the details of the bonds.

The CCG, which said that it had no affiliation with any political party but believes in impartiality, neutrality and commitment to the Constitution, noted with dismay that it took the SBI 17 days to inform the Supreme Court on March 4 that they are not in a position to collate the data by March 6.

"For India's largest bank with 48 crore accounts and boasting high levels of digitisation, a pathetic excuse has been proffered that records were kept manually and hence the extension sought," it said in a letter to Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar and Election Commissioner Arun Goel.

'Shielding the govt.'

The CCG quoted a letter by Thomas Franco, former general secretary of the All India Banking Officers' Confederation, which pointed out that SBI had asked the government in June 2018 for a sum of more than ₹60 lakh for development of IT systems for the electoral bonds scheme.

The SBI denying this information and indicating that it would not be available before the general election seems to indicate that the bank is shielding the government in power from any criticism, the letter said.

In an attack on Lalu, Shah says land mafia will be punished

Amit Bhelari
PATNA

Amit Shah

Senior Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader and Union Home Minister Amit Shah made scathing remarks against Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) chief Lalu Prasad during the *Pichda-Ati Pichda Mahasammelan* (Backward-Extremely Backward Conference) organised by the OBC (Other Backward Class) Morcha of the party at Patna's Paliganj on Saturday.

"Lalu Prasad *ji* can never do any welfare work for the Backward and Extremely Backward Classes; he can only do one work and that is grabbing their land. I want to warn RJD that once again a double-engine government has come into power in Bihar and the land mafia would be punished," Mr. Shah said. He further asserted that the National Democratic Alliance government (NDA) will form a committee to investigate cases in which land of poor people has been grabbed.

Mr. Shah said those found guilty would be sent to jail.

He also alleged that the Congress and Mr. Prasad only "gave respect to their own family members", and humiliated OBCs and EBCs.

‘Bharat Shakti’ to showcase prowess of indigenous defence equipment

The tri-service demonstration on March 12 at the Pokhran firing range in Rajasthan will be witnessed by PM Modi; display of tactical operations will end with destruction of enemy armour while the Navy will undertake maritime operations

Dinakar Peri
NEW DELHI

A firepower demonstration ‘Exercise Bharat Shakti’ will be held on March 12 at the Pokhran firing range in Rajasthan to demonstrate the “prowess” of indigenously manufactured defence equipment of the three Services, the Indian Army, Navy and Air Force, with particular focus on “jointness” and synergy. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to witness the demonstration.

“The event will demonstrate the indigenous capability of the three Services through an integrated Tri-Service firepower and manoeuvre exercise for about 50 minutes. This event will be followed by a static equipment display,” Major General C.S. Mann, Additional Director General of the Army Design Bureau, briefing the media on Saturday, said.

Emphasising indigenous weapon systems, Maj. Gen. Mann said the announcement of ‘Make in India’ was a “watershed moment”, wherein the year 2020 brought about a paradigm shift with the launch of the ‘Atmanirbhar Bharat’ campaign. “The campaign proved to be a catalyst for transformation in indigenous R&D, adoption of niche technology and establishment of indigenous manufacturing ecosystem, ushering in the manifestation of Bharat’s quest for self-reliance,” he said. “This is evident from the fact that the global share in Indian Armed Forces’ capability development projects has steadily declined, whereas the

Major General C.S. Mann

share of domestic component has increased considerably.”

He said lethality and potency can be reached only when applied in synergy across multiple domains, brought to bear upon the envisaged threats, and Bharat Shakti would showcase “live integrated multi domain operations of the three Services in offensive operations using indigenous equipment”.

It will also involve the establishment of the Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) grid, interdiction and shaping operations by aerial platforms, the firing of long-range vectors, manoeuvres by mechanised forces, and movement of the infantry in protected mobility vehicles.

The proceedings will commence with the Special Forces of the Army, MarCos of the Navy, and Garuds of the Indian Air Force infiltrating all terrain vehicles and slithering operations, while surveillance of the battlefield will be carried out by Unmanned Aerial Vehicles. This will be followed by the degradation of targets by long range firepower and artillery guns, Maj. Gen. Mann explained.

Further, the IAF will achieve a favourable air situation by engaging strategic targets in depth, whereas the Navy will undertake maritime operations for strategic effects, which will be undertaken at sea and showcased live on screens. Simultaneously, there will be tactical operations of the Indian Army, ending with the destruction of enemy armour.

“The aspects of India’s cyber and multi-domain operations capability are also being dovetailed along with operations of Army, Navy and Air Force.

This exercise would showcase high synergy, multi-Service, multi-domain capability, thereby demonstrating inter-Service synergy,” Maj. Gen. Mann added.

Some major aspects of tri-Service integration will be showcased in the demonstration.

On the draw

Navy demonstrates twin-carrier operations

The Navy showcased its operations with MiG-29K fighter jets taking off from *INS Vikramaditya* and *INS Vikrant*. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Dinakar Peri
INS VIKRAMADITYA

The first edition of the Naval Commanders’ Conference of 2024 concluded on Friday. The first part of the conference was held at sea on board aircraft carrier *INS Vikramaditya* on March 5 during which the Navy showcased its “twin-carrier operations” with MiG-29K fighter jets taking off simultaneously from both *INS Vikramaditya* and *INS Vikrant*, and then landing cross deck. The operations were witnessed by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Chief of Defence Staff Gen. Anil Chauhan.

The remainder of the conference was held in New Delhi.

The twin-carrier operations also demonstrate that the first indigenous aircraft carrier, *INS Vikrant,* has been fully integrated into the operational cycle. The twin operations were followed by a sail by several warships of the Navy.

The conference happened amid the high operational tempo of the Navy with developments in the Red Sea and renewed piracy attempts in the Gulf of Aden.

Mr. Singh underscored the leadership role expected of the Indian Navy towards ensuring peace and prosperity in the Indian Ocean Region.

The proceedings at New Delhi on March 7 and 8 included a review of major operational, material, infrastructure, logistics and personnel-related initiatives, the Navy said.

As PM Modi visits Kaziranga, Congress asks when he will find time to visit Manipur

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI/ NEW DELHI

Wild harmony: Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his visit to the Kaziranga National Park in Assam on Saturday. PTI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday urged the people of the country to experience the “unparalleled beauty” of Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve after undertaking elephant-back and jeep safaris.

He also interacted with Van Durga, the team of women forest guards, and lauded their “inspiring” dedication and courage.

“... Nestled amidst lush greenery, this UNESCO World Heritage site is blessed with diverse flora and fauna including the majestic one-horned rhinoceros,” he wrote on X.

Meanwhile, in a post on X, Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh asked why the Prime Minister had not found time to visit the violence-affected Manipur yet.

“We’re glad that the Prime Minister has found time amidst his various travels to spend today morning in Kaziranga, an iconic national park, which owes much to the great interest shown both by Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi,” he said.

“Why has the Prime Minister, ordinarily misusing taxpayer’s money to campaign around the country, not found the time to visit Manipur yet, or even take a call with the Chief Minister and the political parties of the State?” Mr. Ramesh said in his post.

Office of General Manager,
PIU Song Dam Drinking Water Project, UPDCC
Ground Floor, Lakhwad Field Hostel,
Yamuna Colony, District Dehradun - 248001

NATIONAL COMPETITIEVE BIDDING
e-Tender Notice

Office of the General Manager (Civil), Song Dam Project, UPDCC Limited (A Govt. of Uttarakhand Construction Corporation), Yamuna Colony (Dehradun), invites online bids from interested parties. Brief summaryof bid is given as below:
Bid Identification No:01/GM/PIUS/Dam/2023-24

Name of work :	Civil Works including HM works for Construction of 130.6 M High Concrete Gravity Dam and Appurtenant Works Across River Song of Song Dam Drinking Water Project in District Dehradun, Uttarakhand
Estimated cost (Exclusive of GST) :	1306.40 Cr
Date of availability of bid document on website :	11.03.2024 11:00 AM onwards
Clarification Start Date :	11.03.2024
Clarification End Date :	20.03.2024
Date of Meeting Pre Bid :	22.03.2024 11:00 AM onwards
Reply of Clarifications :	30.03.2024
Last date for submission of bid son website :	16.04.2024 till 05:00 PM
Date of opening of Technical Bids :	18.04.2024 3:30 PM

For full & further details, kindly Visit e-procurement portal “**http:// uktenders.gov.in**”

General Manager (Civil)

"Avoid wasteful use of Water"

Office of the Superintendent Engineer cum Project Manager
Watershed Cell cum Data Center Zila Parishad Baran

File No. NIT/2023-24/3181 Date 01/03/2024

NOTICE INVITING BID
NIT NO. 02/2023-24
NIB NO. WSC2324A0513

Bids for **Construction of Pakka Check Dam/ Anicut, Sunkan Pond, Talai and MPT/PT, CCT Works in MJSA-2.0 Scheme District- Baran** of Estimated Value INR-1273.33 Lacs are invited from interested bidders From **11.00 AM 01.03.2024 to 6 PM 11.03.2024**. Other particulars of the bid may be visited on the procurement portal (https://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in or https://sppp.rajasthan.gov.in/) of the state, and **www.watershed.gov.in** departmental website.

UBN No. :- WSC2324WSOB01055, UBN No.:- WSC2324WSOB01056,
UBN No. :- WSC2324WSOB01057, UBN No. :- WSC2324WSOB01058,
UBN No. :- WSC2324WSOB01059, UBN No. :- WSC2324WSOB01060,
UBN No. :- WSC2324WSOB01061, UBN No. :- WSC2324WSOB01062,
UBN No. :- WSC2324WSOB01063, UBN No. :- WSC2324WSOB01064,
UBN No. :- WSC2324WSOB01065, UBN No. :- WSC2324WSOB01066

(Manoj Purabgola)
Superintendent Engineer cum Project Manager
Watershed Cell cum Data Center Zila Parishad Baran

DIPR/C/2222

GOVERNMENT OF RAJASTHAN
SUPERINTENDENT MATHURADAS MATHUR HOSPITAL, JODHPUR
(Attached with Dr. S.N. Medical College Jodhpur)
Tel No. 0291-2438655 E-Mail: mdmh.tender@gmail.com
NO.:- Date:

E-TENDER NOTICE NO. 08(2023-24)

Online Bids are invited from eligible bidders i.e Manufacturer / Authorized Distributors / Dealers to provide various items & Services at Mathura Das Mathur Hospital Jodhpur attached to Dr. S.N. Medical College Jodhpur as per tender conditions Tender are to be submitted duly digitally signed in electronic format only on website http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in. The tender documents may be downloaded from above mentioned website. The tender document may also be seen on http://sppp.rajasthan.gov.in.

Item No.	Particulars	Estimated Cost (Rs. in Lacs)	UBN No.	Bid Document Download & Submission start on Date mention below 05.00 PM	Technical Bid Opening at 11.00 AM Mention below
1.	CAMC of Air Conditioner with Operation (2 years)	110.00	SMC2324WSRC00357	07/03/2024	16/04/2024
2.	CAMC of Oxygen Plant & Oxygen Pipeline with Man Power (2 years)	125.00	SMC2324SLRC00358	07/03/2024	16/04/2024
3.	CAMC of Lift with Operation (2 years)	100.00	SMC2324SLRC00359	07/03/2024	16/04/2024
4.	CAMC of Diesel Generator Set (2 years)	35.00	SMC2324SLRC00360	07/03/2024	03/04/2024
5.	Supply of Cardiology and Cath Lab Implants (2 Years)	450.00	SMC2324GLRC00361	07/03/2024	04/04/2024
6.	Supply of Drug and Medicine (2 years)	800.00	SMC2324GLRC00362	07/03/2024	16/04/2024
7.	Supply of Instruments for Surgery Department (2 years)	600.00	SMC2324GLRC00363	07/03/2024	16/04/2024
8.	Supply of ECHO Machine	50.00	SMC2324GLRC00364	07/03/2024	04/04/2024
9.	Supply of Green Vegetables (2 years)	10.00	SMC2324GSRC00371	07/03/2024	04/04/2024
10.	Supply of Instruments for Physiotherapy Department	5.70	SMC2324GSRC00365	07/03/2024	05/04/2024
11.	Job Basis Service of Perfusionist (2 years)	38.52	SMC2324SLRC00366	07/03/2024	05/04/2024
12.	Supply of Refrigerator	11.00	SMC2324GLRC00367	07/03/2024	05/04/2024
13.	Supply of Printing and Stationary (2 years)	100.00	SMC2324GLRC00368	07/03/2024	05/04/2024
14.	Supply of Endoscopic Acessories (2 years)	125.0	SMC2324GLRC00369	07/03/2024	05/04/2024
15.	Supply of Electric and General Items (2 years)	30.00	SMC2324GLRC00370	07/03/2024	05/04/2024

Superintendent
DIPR/C/2531 **Mathura Das Mathur Hospital, Jodhpur**

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, PWD DIVISION SALUMBER

File No:- TS/NIT/D-2218 Date : 04-03-2024

Notice Inviting Bid No. 29/2023-24

Bids for Rate Contract for Construction Various BT road under DMFT Head are invited form interested bidders upto time 9.30 date 07.03.2024 to time 18.00 date 26.03.2024. Other particulars of the bid may be visited on the procurement portal (http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in, http://sppp.raj.nic.in) of the state; and PWD departmental website. The approximate value of the procurement is Rs. 415.00 Lacs

(R.N. Meena)
Executive Engineer
PWD Dn Salumber
DIPR/C/2618 **Mobile No 79767-04568**

Rajasthan State Highways Authority, Jaipur

Notice Inviting Bid (52/2023-24)

Bids for collection of user fee on **“Siwana-Samdari-Balesar section of SH-66 (Km 00+000 to Km 90+648, 0 at Siwana**) in the State of Rajasthan” are invited from interested bidders upto 11:30 AM on 03.04.2024. Other particulars of bid may be visited on the procurement portal (http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in http://sppp.raj.nic.in) of the state; and department website. The estimated value of Remittance for one is Rs. 4.37 Crore.

UBN No. PWD2324SLOB21543

(V.L. Dhankhar)
Member (Works, Contracts & Operations)
DIPR/C/2723 **Rajasthan State Highways Authority, Jaipur**

Office of the Superintendent Engineering and Project Manager
WCDC, Karauli

No. 2151 Date:- 05-03-2024

NOTICE INVITING BID
NIB No 03 /2023-24

Bids for Anicut, Farm Pond, Percolation tank, Mpt, Talab, Talai, Talab Renovation, Pakka check dem, Peripheral bund, Subsurface barriers, LSCD, ECD Construction & Pasture development work Project Karauli-WDC-01/2021-22 Block-Karauli, Karauli WDC-02/2021-22 Block - Todabhim, Karauli-WDC-03/2022-23 Block - Mandrail of estimated value INR 773.98 Lacs [08 Package] are invited from interested bidders up to 06.00 PM, 14-03-2024, Other particulars of the bid may be visited on the procurement portal (https://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in or https://sppp.rajasthan.gov.in/) of the state, departmental website.
NIB CODE:- WSC2324A0547

UBN NO- WSC2324WSRC01149, UBN NO- WSC2324WSRC01151,
UBN NO- WSC2324WSRC01152, UBN NO- WSC2324WSRC01153,
UBN NO- WSC2324WSRC01154, UBN NO- WSC2324WSRC01155,
UBN NO- WSC2324WSRC01156, UBN NO- WSC2324WSRC01157

[Narendra Singh Mothu]
Superintending Engineer and Project Manager
DIPR/C/2414 **WCDC Zila Parishad Karauli**

Office of Additional Chief Engineer PHED, Region Bharatpur
Telephone No 05644-222731, 221500, Email: rj_acebha@nic.in
Notice Inviting Bid No. 115-121/2023-24

Online bids for NIT No. 115-121/2023-24 (07 work), Costing Rs. 2097.33 Lacs is invited on behalf of the Governor of Rajasthan from eligible enlisted in appropriate class contractors of PHED, Rajasthan and meeting eligibility criteria. Contractors enlisted with other departments of Government of Rajasthan and enlisted with CPWD/ Postal/ Telecom/ Railways/ MES/ other State Government/ Central Government undertakings/ organization in class equivalent to “A/AA’” class of Rajasthan (as applicable) and meeting prescribed eligibility criteria may also apply. Details of this Bid notification and pre-qualification criteria can also be seen in NIB exhibited on web site www.dipr.rajasthan.gov.in, http://sppp.rajasthan.gov.in and http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in. Bids are to be submitted online electronic format on web site http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in from 01-03-2024 to 27-03-2024 (6PM) & Bids are to be opened at 11.00 AM on 28.03.2024.
NIB Code : PHE2324A5910
UBN No 1. PHE2324WSOB14112 2. PHE2324WSOB14114
3. PHE2324WSOB14116 4. PHE2324WSOB14120
5. PHE2324WSOB14121 6. PHE2324WSOB14122
7. PHE2324WSOB14123

(Ramniwas Meena)
Addl. Chief Engineer
DIPR/C/2476 **PHED, Region Bharatpur**

MAHATRANSCO Maharashtra State Electricity Transmission Co. Ltd.

INVITATION FOR BID (IFB) (LOCAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING)

SRM e-Tender No. T-2410/MSETCL/CO/Projects/T/Pre-Tender (RFx No. 6000001172)

MSETCL invites offers by SRM e-tendering in TWO bid system (Techno-Commercial Bid and Price Bid) from the eligible registered bidders for the following work as detailed below.
“Work of Construction of 220kV D/C line from CTT location around 3.93km from 400/220kV Talegaon PGCIL S/S to 220kV Chakan Phase-II S/S using O/H HTLS conductor on monopole – 3.89km along with 2x220kV end bays at 220kV Chakan Phase-II S/S under Pune zone in Maharashtra”
Interested bidders may obtain further information available on the website. **https://srmetender.mahatransco.in**
The date of downloading of Bid documents available on the website is from 05.03.2024.

Sd/-
Chief Engineer (Projects), MSETCL

APPOINTMENT

GOVERNMENT OF TAMILNADU
DIRECTORATE OF BACKWARD CLASSES WELFARE
CHEPAUK, CHENNAI - 600 005.

e-Tender Notice No.03 / 2023-24 **Dated: 08.03.2024**

e-TENDER NOTICE - INVITING TENDER UNDER FIXED RATE CONTRACT FROM MANUFACTURERS OF BICYCLES FOR SCHOOL GIRLS AND BOYS WITHIN INDIA

For and on behalf of the Governor of Tamil Nadu, Online e-Tenders are invited under fixed rate contract for the supply of School Girl’s and Boy’s Bi-cycles under Two Cover System from the reputed Bi-cycle Manufacturing Firms within the Union of India. The firms should conform to IS Specifications (IS No. 10613: 2014 or latest) as specified in the Tender Document and have valid ISO certification and capacity to deliver the Bi-cycles as per the requirements.

DETAILS OF e-TENDER NOTICE NO.03/2023-24

Tender inviting Officer/ Authority Designation Address	**The Deputy Director,** Directorate of Backward Classes Welfare, Ezhilagam Annexe Building, 2nd floor, Chepauk, Chennai-600 005, Tamil Nadu.
Description of item	Procurement of approximately **243782** numbers of School Boys and **303894** numbers of School Girls Bi-cycles. Total **547676** number of Bi-cycles to be supplied for the year 2024-25
Period of supply	90 days from the date of receipt of Purchase Order.
Earnest Money Deposit.	**Rs.1,40,00,000/- (Rupees One Crore and Forty Lakh only)** payment should be made only through online.
Tender documents available for obtaining e-Tender	For free download of Tender document and for further details please visit the Government website **https://www.tntenders.gov.in** & e-Tender should be submitted only through Online mode.
Period of submission of e-Tender	From **11.03.2024 to 22.04.2024 at 4.00 P.M.** through online mode at **https://www.tntenders.gov.in**
Date, Time and place of Pre-bid meeting	On **25.03.2024 at 12:00 Noon,** in the Conference Hall of Directorate of Backward Classes Welfare, Ezhilagam Annexe Building, 2nd floor, Chepauk, Chennai-600 005, Tamil Nadu.
Submission of **two Sample Bicycles** (one Girl and one Boy), Date, Time & Place.	**On 22.04.2024 at 11.00 A.M. THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR,** Directorate of Backward Classes Welfare, Ezhilagam Annexe Building, 2nd floor, Chepauk, Chennai-600 005, Tamil Nadu.
Date, time and place of Opening of Technical Bid of the e-Tender	**On 24.04.2024 at 11:00 A.M.** through online mode at **https://www.tntenders.gov.in**

DEPUTY DIRECTOR,
DIRECTORATE OF BACKWARD CLASSES WELFARE,
Chepauk, Chennai - 600 005.

DIPR/1506/Tender/2024

aavin ERODE DISTRICT CO OPERATIVE MILK PRODUCERS' UNION LIMITED
CATTLE FEED PLANT, CHENNIMALAI ROAD, ERODE -638 001.
Email.id: eroaavin.cfp@gmail.com

TENDER NOTICE (e-submission)
(Only through e-Procurement Portal at http://tntenders.gov.in)

TWO PART Tenders are invited for two years by way of e-submission through e-procurement Portal only from Private Lorry providers/contractors for Supply of Cattle Feed and Mineral Salt Mix to Various District Unions, Government Institutions, Government Farms And A.H.Department from Aavin Cattle Feed Plant, Erode.

1	Tender document availability	The tender documents can be downloaded from website e-Procurement Portal **http://tntenders.gov.in** upto **16.04.2024 5.45 pm.**
2	e-Submission closing date & time	**17.04.2024 upto 3.00 PM**
3	Pre Bid Meeting	**Cattle Feed Plant, Chennimalai Road, Erode - 638 001 on 27.03.2024 11.00 AM**
4	Bid-opening Date, Time & address	**Part-I Technical Bid 18.04.2024 at 11.00 AM**
		Part -II Commercial Bid After scrutinization of Technical bids, information through **http://tntenders.gov.in**
		Cattle Feed Plant, Chennimalai Road, Erode - 638 001
5	The tenderers should submit their bids only through e-Procurement Portal **http://tntenders.gov.in.** All other details can be seen in the tender documents. Corrigendum/Addendum to this publication, if any would appear only on the above said website. If any modification in this regard it will be communicated through above website only.	
6	The decision of General Manager, EDCMPU Ltd, Erode shall be final conclusive and binding on all matters relating to this tender.	

Place: Erode
Date : 08.03.2024 DIPR/1502/TENDER/2024

General Manager,
Erode District Cooperative Milk Producers Union Ltd.

CHENNAI METRO RAIL LIMITED
(A Joint Venture of Govt. of India & Govt. of Tamil Nadu)
(ISO 9001:2015 AND ISO 14001:2015 CERTIFIED)
METROS, ANNA SALAI, NANDANAM, CHENNAI - 600 035.

EMPLOYMENT NOTIFICATION No: CMRL/HR/CON/DEP/06/2024, dated 10-03-2024.

CMRL invites applications from qualified & experienced personnel for appointment of under mentioned posts on deputation / contract basis:-

Post Code	Name of the Post	Type of Employment	No. of Post	Consolidated Pay (Per Month)	Min Exp. (Yrs)	Max Age (Yrs)
1	AGM (RS)	Contract	2	Rs. 1,60,000/-	17	47
2	JGM (RS)			Rs.1,45,000/-	15	43
3	JGM (PS & OHE)	Deputation / Contract	1			
4	Manager (Operations)	Contract	2	Rs.85,000/-	7	38
5	DM / AM (RS)		1	DM Rs.75,000/- AM Rs.62,000/-	DM 4 AM 2	DM 35 AM 30
6	AM (GC)		2			

Note:
i. Please note the detailed employment notification will be published in CMRL website vide URL: **https://chennaimetrorail.org** on or before 11.03.2024.
ii. Salary is negotiable for deserving candidates.
iii. Last date for receipt of application is **24.04.2024.**

DIPR/367/Display/2024 **Additional General Manager (HR)**

INBRIEF

Krystyna Pyszkova of Czech Republic becomes Miss World

Czech Republic's Krystyna Pyszkova on Saturday won the coveted Miss World 2024 title at a grand event in Mumbai. Lebanon Yasmina Zaytoun was named the first runner-up. Reigning Miss World Karolina Bielawska from Poland crowned Ms. Pyszkova successor at the star-studded finale here. India, which hosted the event after 28 years, was represented by 22-year-old Sini Shetty, who could not make it to the top four of the contest. India has won the title six times – Reita Faria (1966), Aishwarya Rai Bachchan (1994), Diana Hayden (1997), Yukta Mookhey (1999), Priyanka Chopra Jonas (2000), and Manushi Chillar (2017). PTI

Bofors case: application in SC seeks early hearing of plea

An application has been filed in the Supreme Court seeking an early hearing of a petition challenging the Delhi High Court's 2005 verdict which quashed all charges, including those against the Hinduja brothers, in the politically sensitive ₹64 crore Bofors pay-off case. The application, filed by advocate Ajay Agrawal, says the court had on November 2, 2018, dismissed the CBI's plea against the verdict and said the agency can raise all grounds in the appeal filed by him against the same judgment. Mr. Agrawal said he had filed the petition against the verdict back in 2005 and over three decades have gone by since the matter came to light. PTI

Bronze statue of Lachit Borphukan unveiled in Assam

A 125-feet bronze statue of Ahom general Lachit Borphukan was unveiled at his burial site in eastern Assam's Jorhat district by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday. The Statue of Valour is 84 feet tall, set on a pedestal of 41 feet, making the total height of the figurine 125 feet. It was unveiled at the Lachit Barphukan Maidam Development Project at Hollongapar near Teok. The area spread over 16.5 acres, is being developed as a tourist spot, highlighting the history of the region. The foundation of the statue was laid by former President Ram Nath Kovind in 2022. Lachit Borphukan was an army commander of the Ahom kingdom. PTI

Naveen Patnaik govt. revises primary schoolteachers' pay

The Odisha government on Saturday revised the pay structure of primary school teachers, in a move that is expected to help over one lakh teachers and other officers across the State. The Cabinet chaired by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik approved the proposal to raise their pay structure by one level. The government will incur an additional expenditure of ₹587 crore per annum, said a government statement. This decision carries substantial importance ahead of the Lok Sabha and Assembly elections. Primary schoolteachers had persistently campaigned for salary revision and staged various protests to draw the government's attention.

'Canal Man' picks up his shovel again to help farmers

Amit Bhelari
GAYA

Laungi Bhuiya of Kothilwa spent 30 years cutting through 3 km of stone to finish his first canal in October 2020

Laungi Bhuiya says the canals that he digs will not only aid irrigation but also offer fishing opportunities. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Laungi Bhuiya, 71, also known as the 'Canal Man', is single-handedly digging a second canal of 5 km so that rainwater cascading down the Bangetha hills in Bihar, can be diverted to the fields for the farming.

Mr. Bhuiya, who lives in Kothilwa village, 80 km away from the Gaya district headquarters, began the process three years ago, having carved out 3.5 km so far.

He hopes to complete another 1.5 km in the next year-and-a-half, using nothing more than an axe and spade. The canal is 5 feet wide and 3 feet deep.

The first canal he constructed was finished in October 2020, and took him 30 years to cut through 3 km of stone. "It helped the villagers of only three villages. However, this one will provide water to another five. About 10,000 to 12,000 people will benefit from it," Mr. Bhuiya said.

Impressed by his work, Anand Mahindra, Chairperson of the Mahindra Group, had gifted him a tractor after he had completed the first canal. This is now Mr. Bhuiya's only source of income.

Daily routine

Every morning, Mr. Bhuiya, who owns less than half an acre of land, rises, and leaving his mud-and-straw home, walks about 2 km to his work spot. "Farmers are not able to utilise rainwater adequately because there is no proper channel for it," he said.

He understands the local rainfall and irrigation patterns, as three of his four sons, ranging in ages from 25 to 40, are farmers. A fourth works as a helper in a sweet shop in Chennai.

"The second canal will not only help in providing water for irrigation, but also give people the opportunity to fish. I have created four small ponds as well, through its course," Mr. Bhuiya said. The previous canal took rainwater to an existing village pond, from where people use water for irrigation.

Farmers in this area mostly grew maize and gram, but once water became available, they began to grow wheat and rice too, resulting in a higher income.

Rinku Kumar, a primary school teacher in Kothilwa village, praised Mr. Bhuiya's work and said: "The youth of the village was migrating to other places in search of jobs. Laungi Bhuiya, who used to go to the forest daily to graze goats, thought about the future of the village."

Another villager, Kesariya Devi, said the water crisis will end once the second canal is operational. "Earlier water in the area was available at a depth of 100 feet; now, we hit water at 20 feet," she said, indicating that the groundwater levels have risen.

"Hardly anyone could afford a borewell here, but now many people have them, since the depth they have to bore to is less than before."

Initial scepticism

When Mr. Bhuiya began to carve out the first canal, villagers called him *Pagla Bhuiya* (Mad Bhuiya). His wife Ram Rati Devi threw him out of the house briefly. His second son Brahmdeo said family members would earlier hide his axe and spade, so he could not work. But Mr. Bhuiya devised a way of hiding his own tools near the canal, returning home empty-handed.

"However, after seeing the impact of his work, now all the villagers praise him. I am proud that my father has done something for humanity. Though he is ageing, he still works for six to seven hours a day," said Mr. Brahmdeo.

Mr. Bhuiya's only wish now is to get an earth-moving machine to quicken the pace of his work.

Hundreds turn up to save trees in Uttarakhand

Ishita Mishra
NEW DELHI

Hundreds of men, women and children gathered at the holy Jageshwar Dham in Almora district of Uttarakhand on March 8, on the occasion of Mahashivaratri, not just to offer prayers but also tie *raksha sootra* (thread for protection) around the region's famous Himalayan cedar trees, which are considered sacred.

Some of the trees are over 500 years old and they surround one of the largest clusters of 125 temples within one complex in the world, situated at 1,870 metres above sea level.

The *raksha sootra* was tied around more than 1,000 trees that were to be axed for a road widening project under the State government's 'Manas Khand Mandir Mala Mission' that aims to improve connectivity to about 50 temples in Uttarakhand. Jageshwar is one among them.

The protest, which began as letters to government officials. Later, the hashtag #SaveJageshwar became a trend on social media site X. The public outcry drew widespread criticism against the government. Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami said officials had been asked to look for another route for road construction.

Constitution has its place from courts to remote villages: CJI

It has met the challenges of the nation's diverse society, says Chief Justice D.Y. Chandrachud; stresses that fraternity is vital to maintain equality

The Hindu Bureau
JAIPUR

Foundational values: Union Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal, Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud and Rajasthan High Court Chief Justice M.M Shrivastava in Bikaner on Saturday. ANI

Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud on Saturday laid emphasis on the constitutional values of liberty, equality and fraternity for ensuring the nation's unity and progress, and said the Constitution's learning should reach the villages across the country. "Our Constitution has its place from the court's corridors to the remote villages. It is not limited to books alone," the CJI said.

Justice Chandrachud inaugurated a regional '*Hamara Samvidhan Hamara Samman*' (Our Constitution, Our Honour) campaign at Maharaja Ganga Singh University's auditorium in Bikaner to enhance awareness about the Constitution and the citizens' rights and duties, and commemorate the 75th year of India as a republic.

Union Law and Justice Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal and the Chief Justice of Rajasthan High Court M.M. Shrivastava were among those present at the event.

Chief Justice Chandrachud said the basic rights, such as daily wages, pension, clean water, ration, health care and education, flowed from the Constitution, which had met the challenges of the country's diverse society and given dignity to the people. Mutual fraternity was necessary to maintain equality in the country, he added.

The CJI quoted B.R. Ambedkar's speech in the Constituent Assembly, pointing out that the Constitution was not a mere lawyers' document, but was a vehicle of life, and its spirit was always the spirit of age.

"The Constitution reflects our collective aspirations... We are committed to the rule of law and protection of human rights because of the Constitution," he said.

Referring to the technological advancements being applied to judicial institutions, Justice Chandrachud said that while the Supreme Court had started hearing cases through video-conferencing, the potential of technology was being utilised to spread legal awareness and strengthen legal services as well. A lawyer sitting in any part of the country could argue his case in the courts situated elsewhere, he said.

"The Supreme Court has worked to enhance its capacity through technology. The district courts are also being sensitised, as they constitute the first step towards justice," the Chief Justice said.

Centre issues order to curb tailgating of Digi Yatra passengers

Jagriti Chandra
NEW DELHI

E-gate manufacturers have been asked to upgrade technology to ensure that two passengers cannot pass through them at the same time

The Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) has asked airports and airlines to use better technology and assign more manpower resources to prevent passengers from tailgating through automatic gates at various checkpoints.

This is needed to ensure the smooth implementation of Digi Yatra, a system for paperless travel.

"Strict instructions have been given against tailgating wherever there are e-gates," a senior official of the Union Home Ministry told *The Hindu* on the condition of anonymity.

Security breaches

The government directive follows two serious security breaches within 10 days in February when ticketless travellers entered the passenger building and even the boarding gate at Mumbai airport.

On February 22, a 22-year-old man travelling without a ticket was able to reach the aerobridge by walking closely behind other passengers and passing through the terminal entry gate where CISF staff were carrying out manual checking, followed by one e-gate before the passenger screening area and another after it. The man was stopped by an IndiGo staff after he had entered an aerobridge to board a plane.

Earlier, on February 12, a man in his 60s was similarly able to travel through the airport and even enter an IndiGo aircraft.

Need for improvement

E-gate manufacturers have been asked to improve their technology to ensure that two passengers cannot pass through them at the same time.

Airlines have also been told to follow the standard operating procedures (SOPs) that have been laid down, deploy adequate manpower at the boarding gates, and ensure that passengers are boarded zone-wise – where passengers who are assigned seats at the back of the plane board first – to avoid over-crowding.

Digi Yatra, a biometric-based boarding system which allows passengers to use their facial scan as a ticket, has been rolled out at 13 airports so far and 24 more airports will get the facility this year.

SUDOKU

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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★☆☆

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

3	2	6	7	5	9	8	1	4
5	1	8	6	4	2	3	7	9
9	7	4	1	3	8	2	5	6
4	5	9	3	2	1	7	6	8
8	3	1	5	7	6	9	4	2
7	6	2	8	9	4	5	3	1
2	4	3	9	1	7	6	8	5
1	8	5	2	6	3	4	9	7
6	9	7	4	8	5	1	2	3

Lanka's tourism surge a clarion call for Kerala

Dhinesh Kallungal
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Gliding along: A tourist enjoys parasailing at Kovalam beach in Thiruvananthapuram. In 2023, Kerala recorded 6.49 lakh arrivals. PTI

The meteoric rise of Sri Lanka's tourism sector from the ashes of the economic downturn and civil unrest a year ago now serves as a wake-up call for Kerala, two major foreign tourist destinations in South Asia.

Sri Lanka is considered a major competitor to Kerala with both destinations blessed with panoramic landscapes, beaches, wildlife, verdant leaf-cloaked hills, relatively similar cuisine, and similar weather.

However, there has been a growing preference for Colombo by international tourists over Kerala of late, despite the State having beautiful backwaters and being considered a cradle of Ayurveda, for which there are no real equivalents in Sri Lanka.

Foreign tourist arrivals in Sri Lanka and Kerala were 6.54 lakh and 6.59 lakh, respectively, in 2010, hardly a year after the civil war came to an end in the island nation.

Highest in 2019

The next decade was very crucial for Sri Lanka with Colombo literally outpacing Kerala in absolute numbers in terms of foreign tourist arrivals. The tourist arrivals at one point touched 23.33 lakh in 2018.

On the other hand, Kerala tourism clocked 11.89 lakh in 2019, the highest ever number clocked by the State.

However, things went into a tailspin again after the Easter Day bombing in Colombo in 2019, which was followed by the COVID-19 outbreak and subsequent financial turmoil in Sri Lanka.

The arrival of foreigners in Lanka started declining to 7.19 lakh in 2022. Kerala was then poised to get a share of foreigners looking for budget destinations in Lanka as it was the immediate choice near Colombo.

Strong comeback

However, taking competitors by surprise, Lankan tourism made a strong comeback in 2023 with foreign tourist arrivals touching a whopping 14.87 lakh in the just concluded season in 2023, whereas Kerala could register only an arrival of 6.49 lakh in 2023, which is still short of its 2010 arrivals.

Kerala Tourism Minister P.A. Mohamed Riyas attributed the deepening conflict in some parts of the globe to the slow recovery of international tourism in Kerala after the pandemic, but Colombo could make a strong comeback riding high on the foreigners' preference for the island nation over Kerala, despite the reports of power cuts, fuel shortages, and anti-government protests there.

Interestingly, Indians account for the lion's share of foreign tourist arrivals in Sri Lanka followed by Russians and those from the U.K.

'Almost the same'

Speaking to *The Hindu*, Jaison Panikulangara, director of SAJ House Boat Builders and Operators, who invested in the houseboat tourism industry in Colombo, said that be it Galle Fort in Sri Lanka or Fort Kochi in Kerala, the tourist experience is almost the same with the fascinating destinations providing a peep into the colonial influence and ancient history of the cities when digging a little deeper. Although the beach experience in Sri Lanka is more remarkable than in Kerala, said Mr. Panikulangara.

Sandeshkhali police officer transferred

Press Trust of India
KOLKATA

The West Bengal government on Saturday transferred Biswajit Shanpui, the officer-in-charge of Sandeshkhali police station, amid the ongoing furore over allegations of sexual abuse and land grabbing against local Trinamool Congress leaders.

Gopal Sarkar has been appointed as Mr. Shanpui's replacement.

Police authorities described the transfers as routine administrative actions, noting a reorganisation of additional officials in the district.

On March 1, the State government removed two officers from Basirhat police district, following the arrest of Shahjahan Sheikh. He had been on the run for 55 days.

Why India urgently needs a legal framework for genomics

Despite significant established capacity and expertise in India, a huge number of genome samples from the country are sequenced and/or analysed by companies abroad with little oversight and regulation

Vinod Scaria

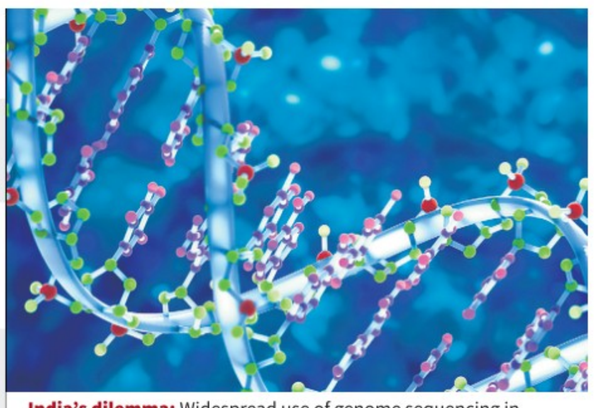
The last two decades have seen unprecedented advances in genomics. These advancements have come in the background of our ability to sequence, analyse and interpret genomes at an unprecedented scale, along with an emerging and expanding corpus of evidence to act upon the genomic information for healthcare decision making. As the costs of sequencing continue to plummet, the next decade is expected to see widespread use of genome sequencing in clinical settings. The population-scale genome programmes currently under way in many large and small countries encompassing millions of genomes would form the foundation and fuel this paradigm shift. This throws open unprecedented new opportunities, as well as significant new challenges.

India has not been too far behind in human genomics, with the announcement of the first genome sequencing in 2009, 1,000 genomes in 2019 and recently concluded 10,000 genomes last week. These efforts undoubtedly have contributed to significant insights into diseases in the population, estimates of the prevalence of many conditions, and more importantly serving as baseline data for decision making, apart from its utility in accelerating research. However, given the large, diverse and stratified population encompassing over 1.4 billion people, it would mean we need to be ambitious, while at the same time pragmatic, to ensure that the benefits of genomics are not lost out to our people. Apart from significant impetus in sequencing individuals at scale, to match similar efforts across the world, a well-thought-through legal and policy framework and wider and integral participation of industry is essential to accelerate this in India. Many countries have been proactive in formulating legal and policy frameworks to ensure the benefits of the technology are widely accessible while also accelerating research and development.

New opportunities, challenges for genomics

India sequenced the first genome in 2009, 1,000 genomes in 2019, and 10,000 genomes last week

- Data protection is one of the important components that urgently require legal framework
- The Health Ministry Steering committee clearances are required for research collaborations
- But the Director General of Foreign Trade notification currently enables samples from India to cross borders for commercial purposes
- Despite significant established capacity and expertise in India, a significant number of samples from India are sequenced and/or analysed by companies abroad with little oversight and regulation
- With a number of organisations providing genetic testing services, the data remain in silos
- Discrimination based on genetic information is a real concern due to lack of laws preventing it
- Ensuring ethical use of the technology is paramount to both advance it and ensure that people benefit from the use, while also being protected from misuse



India's dilemma: Widespread use of genome sequencing in clinical settings is expected next decade as costs of sequencing continue to drop.

Equity and diversity

Data protection is one of the important components that urgently require a legal framework.

While the Health Ministry Steering committee clearances are required for research collaborations, the Director General of Foreign Trade notification enables samples to cross borders for commercial purposes. This has been widely exploited by large pharma and research organisations abroad to perform research on Indian samples. Despite significant established capacity and expertise in India, a significant number of samples from India are sequenced and/or analysed by companies abroad with little oversight and regulation.

Another issue is the fragmentation of genetic data, with a number of organisations providing genetic testing services, the data remain in silos. Well, aggregated summary data of these tests and results could provide key evidence for public health decision making. For example, summary data of variants and prevalence of variants reported from labs, without personal/identifiable information could enable rough estimates of population-level prevalence of diseases and enable the development of cheaper genetic tests. Without a framework for collecting summary information, the data remains inaccessible for public health decision-making.

Discrimination based on genetic information is indeed a real concern due to the lack of laws preventing it.

For example, a positive genetic test could potentially prevent one from accessing insurance or reimbursement, if the insurance claims it as a pre-existing condition. In fact, family members or even communities could also be discriminated against, given shared genetic variants and prevalence.

The U.S. formulated the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act in 2008 which prevents discrimination based on genetic information.

Equity and diversity in genetic data also is a concern that needs to be addressed especially in a diverse country like India, as unregulated market forces could widen the already acute barriers to access to better healthcare, especially for the poor and ethnic minorities. Lack of equity could result in less research, less insights/ evidence for clinical decision making and eventually exclusion of such groups from access to the benefits of genomic technologies.

Ensuring ethical use of the technology is paramount to both advance it and ensure that people benefit from the use, while also being protected from misuse.

Evidence-based use of genomics and mechanisms to ensure the quality and validity of genomic tests is therefore key. In many countries, professional bodies have come forward to be the vanguards, putting together guidelines, policies and frameworks for fair use. Similar efforts supported by legal provisions are needed in India.

For a better future

The value of the right guidance and policies in advancing human genomics cannot be overstated. Effective regulations ensure a fair playing field. Clear policies foster trust among stakeholders, encouraging collaboration and innovation in this rapidly evolving field.

By emphasising ethical principles and aligning policies with societal needs, human genomics research can realise its full potential in advancing healthcare, improving outcomes, and enhancing the quality of life. With proper oversight, genomic research can revolutionise healthcare, offering personalised treatments, disease prevention strategies, and diagnostic tools.

India has the potential to be a leader by enabling genomics for the masses, at an unprecedented scale opening up unprecedented opportunities and heralding a better and healthier future for its people, but only if it puts the best foot forward.

(*Vinod Scaria is a genomics scientist and senior consultant at Vishwanath Cancer Care Foundation and an Adjunct Professor at the Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur*)

Can resveratrol-copper be used to prevent metastasis?

R. Prasad

A large body of work by researchers at the Tata Memorial Centre (TMC), Mumbai has found conclusive evidence in cell lines, animal studies and two phase-2 clinical trials that cell-free chromatin fragments that are released from dying cells have the ability to readily enter healthy cells in the body and integrate into their genomes and trigger DNA damage by breaking the DNA double-strand, cause apoptosis (programmed cell death) and inflammation. Based on these studies, a team led by Dr. Indraneel Mittra, Professor Emeritus, Department of Surgical Oncology at TMC had proposed that "repeated and lifelong assault on healthy cells by cell-free chromatin fragments may be the underlying cause of ageing and multiple age-related disorders including cancer". They also found that using a combination of two nutraceuticals – resveratrol and copper – minimises the damaging effects of cell-free chromatin fragments.

The researchers have collected sufficient evidence to prove that the toxic effects of chemotherapy are primarily caused by the cell-free chromatin fragments that emerge from dying cells and continue the vicious cycle of killing healthy cells and causing inflammation. This finding challenges the dogma that toxicity caused by chemotherapy is due to the direct damaging effect of drugs on healthy cells. Based on preclinical studies that showed promising results when the resveratrol-copper combination was used, Dr. Mittra and other researchers at TMC tested it on 25 patients undergoing autologous bone marrow transplantation for multiple myeloma and 30 patients with advanced gastric cancer. In both studies, the toxicity of chemotherapy was far less among patients who received the resveratrol-copper combination.

The researchers had earlier reported that cell-free chromatin particles released from dying cancer cells are potentially oncogenic. Studies in mice undertaken by the team showed that oncogenes contained in the cell-free chromatin fragments were carried by blood and had accumulated in the brain cells in mice. Though the oncogenes in the brain can lead to metastasis, the study did not investigate whether the dissemination of oncogenes to brain cells indeed led to the development of metastases.

Villain: Toxic effects of chemotherapy are caused by cell-free chromatin fragments that emerge from the dying cells. GETTY IMAGES

A statement issued on March 1 by TMC categorically stated that the effectiveness of resveratrol-copper for reducing chemotherapy toxicity or increasing cures in cancer patients "remains to be established and is currently under investigation". The statement was released after Dr. Rajendra Badwe, a senior researcher at TMC told NDTV that the nutraceutical to reduce the toxicity of chemotherapy will be available by June this year after approval by the FSSAI. Several media reports wrongly reported that the nutraceutical to be approved by FSSAI is for preventing cancer metastasis.

Multiple benefits

Based on extensive preclinical studies and two phase-2 clinical trials, there is sufficient evidence to believe that resveratrol-copper would reduce chemotoxicity in patients with cancer, Dr. Mittra tells *The Hindu* in an email. "Evidence from pre-clinical studies suggests that resveratrol-copper combination may prevent metastatic spread. Randomised trials are now needed to establish the quantum of benefit [in reducing chemotoxicity]. The results of at least one randomised trial should hopefully be available in about a year's time. In the meantime, and once resveratrol-copper is certified as a nutraceutical, it would be up to any individual to take it for [any of] the above indications if he/she so desires," Dr. Mittra says.

Despite the absence of clinical trials supporting the use of a resveratrol-copper combination to prevent metastasis, Dr. Mittra does not see any problem in patients using the nutraceutical to prevent cancer metastasis as soon as it becomes available.

"Once resveratrol-copper is approved as a nutraceutical anyone should be free to take it. Although at this point, we only have pre-clinical evidence that it prevents metastasis if someone decides to take resveratrol-copper for this indication, being a non-toxic combination, it is unlikely to cause any harm," he says.

"Resveratrol-copper is probably a nutraceutical product with the most scientific evidence to back it for various conditions. For example, our pre-clinical studies have shown that it retards ageing parameters, such as getting rid of amyloid plaques which are responsible for Alzheimer's disease. Resveratrol-copper also prevents telomere shortening, inflammation, DNA damage, and chromosomal abnormalities and reduces blood levels of cholesterol and glucose. So resveratrol-copper may have multiple other health benefits to the person who decides to take it," Dr. Mittra adds. "I have personally been taking resveratrol-copper tablets for the past three years without any side effects. The mother of an oncologist at TMC who is suffering from Alzheimer's disease has been taking resveratrol-copper tablets for several months now with remarkable improvement in her cognitive score and general mental state."

On why the researchers are trying to get the combination approved by FSSAI as a nutraceutical and not as a drug by the drug regulator CDSCO, Dr. Mittra says TMC did not take the nutraceutical route willingly. "We had tied up with an industry partner who was sourcing resveratrol and copper from two different vendors for making the resveratrol-copper tablets in a specific formulation. The industry partner was unable to get their resveratrol-copper formulation approved by DCGI since the latter insisted that the respective vendors from whom resveratrol and copper were being sourced register their products with DCGI from their own GMP facilities. This the vendors were unwilling to do. As a result, the industry partner handed over the project to their subsidiary who are involved in the nutraceutical industry."

SNAPSHOTS

Egg-laying amphibians provide nutrient-rich milk

Feeding offspring with nutrient-rich milk was long seen as a trait unique to mammals. However, several non-mammalian species have been documented as producing nutrients to feed offspring in a functionally similar way to mammalian milk. An egg-laying species of worm-like amphibian feeds a lipid-rich milk-like substance to its hatchlings, according to a new study. The findings report a previously unobserved behaviour and offer new insight into the species' parental care and communication.

New device helps in detection of leaks from surgical joins

A new device tested in pigs enables monitoring and early detection of pH changes in deep tissues due to postoperative leaks following gastrointestinal surgery. Such leaks – which occur at high rates three-seven days following surgery – can be fatal if overlooked. It requires constant monitoring. Yet, early detection remains a challenge. Researchers have developed a novel class of pH-responsive materials for real-time ultrasound measurement of pH changes indicative of leaks from surgical joins.

CO_2 from chemical weathering has its limits

Atmospheric carbon dioxide drawdown from the chemical weathering of rocks peaks across a range of moderate erosion rates, according to a new study. The findings provide new insights into the constraints of weathering-mediated carbon dioxide drawdown and help resolve conflicting data on the impact of erosion on the carbon cycle. The chemical weathering mediates the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and, thereby, the planet's climate.

Question Corner

Double-whammy

Are many Labradors hard-wired for obesity?

New research finds around a quarter of Labrador retriever dogs face a double-whammy of feeling hungry all the time and burning fewer calories due to a genetic mutation. This obesity-driving combination means that dog owners must be particularly strict with feeding and exercising their Labradors to keep them slim. The mutation is in a gene (POMC), which plays a critical role in hunger and energy use. Around 25% of Labradors and 66% of flatcoated retriever dogs have this mutation, which researchers previously showed causes increased interest in food and risk of obesity. The study reveals how the mutation profoundly changes the way Labradors and flatcoated retrievers behave around food. It found that they are hungrier in between meals. The mutation was found to alter a pathway in the dogs' brains associated with body weight regulation. The mutation triggers a starvation signal that tells the body to increase food intake and conserve energy.

Readers may send their questions / answers to questioncorner@thehindu.co.in

What are the hurdles to fair global trade?

What did the latest WTO ministerial meeting at Abu Dhabi broadly achieve? What were India's objectives?

Suresh Seshadri

The story so far:

The World Trade Organization (WTO) held its 13th Ministerial Conference (MC13) at Abu Dhabi in the UAE between February 26 and March 2, which was attended by 166 member countries. At the conclusion of the meeting, a ministerial declaration was adopted that set out a forward-looking, reform agenda for the 30-year-old organisation, which is tasked with overseeing global trade regulations and facilitating smooth cross-border flow of goods, services, investment and people. The members resolved "to preserve and strengthen the ability of the multilateral trading system, with the WTO at its core, to provide meaningful impetus to respond to current trade challenges, take advantage of available opportunities, and ensure the WTO's proper functioning".

What are some key decisions?

The ministers took a number of decisions, including renewing the commitment to have a fully and well-functioning dispute settlement system by 2024 and to improve use of the special and differential treatment (S&DT) provisions for developing and least developed countries (LDCs).

Some of the biggest challenges to the multilateral trading order have come from an increasingly vocal movement across different countries, particularly in developed economies, that seeks to turn inwards and move away from a globalised and relatively harmonised-tariffs approach to world trade. This has come even as the ongoing conflicts in various parts of the world, combined with the sanctions that some states have applied on others over these conflicts, threaten supply chains and the smooth flow of goods and services worldwide. The relative levels of development among the richer nations and the LDCs have also focussed attention on the need to ensure norms do not adopt a 'one-size-fits-all' approach.

> A key concern for India and several other developing economies pertains to the public stockholding programme, which is at the heart of ensuring food security. There is a disagreement with the developed world over procurement prices of foodgrains

How did India approach the deliberations?

A central focus of the Indian delegation headed by Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal was to try and find resolution on a key concern for India and several other developing economies pertaining to the public stockholding (PSH) programme, which is at the heart of ensuring food security in their countries. The PSH is a vital policy tool for the Indian government to procure crops such as rice and wheat from farmers at minimum support price (MSP), and subsequently store and distribute the foodgrains to the poor. The MSP is normally higher than the prevailing market rates and the government supplies the cereals at a low price to ensure food security for the country's more than 800 million beneficiaries. However, under WTO norms, a member nation's food subsidy bill should not exceed 10% of the value of production based on the reference price of 1986-88. Developed nations contend that these kinds of programmes distort global trade in foodgrains, especially by either potentially pushing up or depressing global grain prices.

Some of the other key concerns are related to the fisheries sector and a moratorium on customs duties on e-commerce trade. India, as a low subsidiser of the fisheries sector, had mooted that developing countries be allowed to give subsidies to their poor fishermen to catch fish within the nation's exclusive economic zones (EEZs), or up to 200 nautical miles from the shore. It also proposed rich countries needed to stop providing any kind of subsidies for fishing that their nation's industrialised vessels may carry out in the high seas beyond the EEZs, at least for the next 25 years.

And on e-commerce, India along with several developing nations has been consistently seeking an end to the moratorium in place since 1998 on their ability to levy customs duties on cross-border e-commerce. India has argued that this undermines its ability to generate revenue from a rapidly burgeoning area of global trade.

What were the outcomes at MC13?

On the agriculture front, as the WTO's Director General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala acknowledged in her closing speech, this was the first time that there has been a text. "This has been in the works for the past two decades plus. At MC12 we couldn't even agree on a text. Even though there are challenges, for the first time we have a text," she observed. Also, on the fisheries front, a consensus accord now appears close to reaching fruition by mid-year.

However, disappointingly for India, the exemption from customs duties for e-commerce will now carry on for at least two more years.

What has France ruled on abortion rights?

Why is inscribing the guaranteed right to abortion in the constitution a historic move? When was the Bill introduced? Which section of the constitution has been amended? What are the prevailing laws in other European countries?

Aaratrika Bhaumik

The story so far:

In a global first, France inscribed the guaranteed right to abortion in its constitution on March 8 sending a powerful message of solidarity with women's rights on International Women's Day. Justice Minister Eric Dupond-Moretti used a 19th-century printing press to seal the amendment in France's constitution at a special public ceremony. The measure was approved at a joint session of Parliament on March 4. The move comes after a rollback of abortion rights in the U.S. in recent times, especially the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in 2022 to overturn a 50-year-old ruling in *Roe versus Wade*.

What is the reform's legislative history?

The amendment had already been passed by the National Assembly in January and by the Senate last week. However, final approval by parliamentarians at a joint session was needed to effect constitutional change. During the voting session, out of the 902 legislators, 780 voted in favour of the reform, 72 voted against it and 50 abstained. Abortion, although legal in France since 1975, will now be a "guaranteed freedom" for women. Although rare, amending the constitution is not without precedent in France. The French constitution has been modified nearly 25 times since it was adopted in 1958. The last instance was in 2008 when Parliament was awarded more powers and presidential tenure was limited to a maximum of two consecutive five-year terms in office.

What does the amendment stipulate?

The Bill, introduced last year, amended the 17th paragraph of Article 34 of the French constitution and stipulates that "the law determines the conditions by which is exercised the freedom of women to voluntarily terminate a pregnancy, which is guaranteed." This means that future governments will not be able to drastically modify existing laws which permit termination up to 14 weeks. Indicating how abortion rights have come under the scanner in many countries across Europe, the introduction to the legislation states, "Unfortunately, this event is not isolated: in many countries, even in Europe, there are currents of opinion that seek to hinder at any cost the freedom of women to terminate their pregnancy if they wish."

> Abortion is currently accessible in more than 40 European nations, but some countries are limiting access to the procedure

Historic move: French President Emmanuel Macron at a ceremony to seal the right to abortion in the French constitution in Paris, on March 8. AP

Is this a first-of-its-kind precedent?

France is the only country to currently have such a specification about abortion, although former Communist-run Yugoslavia's 1974 constitution said that "a person is free to decide on having children" and that such a right can only be limited "for the reasons of health protection." After its disintegration in the early 1990s, several Balkan states adopted similar measures without an explicit constitutional guarantee. For instance, Serbia's constitution in less specific terms states that "everyone has the right to decide on childbirth."

However, some argue that abortion was already constitutionally protected following a 2001 ruling in which France's constitutional council based its approval of abortion on the notion of liberty enshrined in the 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man, which is technically a part of the constitution.

How has it been received?

Unlike in the U.S., the issue of abortion is not highly divisive across the political spectrum in France. Most French people believe that abortion is a woman's right and an essential public health service. A poll conducted by the French Institute of Public Opinion (IFOP) in 2022 showed that 81% of respondents were in favour of enshrining the right to have an abortion in the constitution. According to government figures, 2,34,000 abortions were carried out in France in 2022.

The right to abortion has not faced any significant challenges from political parties in France, including conservatives and the far-right National Rally party. While some right-wing senators from the Républicains party voted against the first attempt to change the constitution in October 2022, the stance of major political parties has generally aligned with that of the French public. Marine Le Pen, leader of the far-right National Rally, told *Reuters* earlier that the move was unnecessary and a political gimmick, although her party would not vote against it. Critics have however warned that the move is a conscious effort by French President Emmanuel Macron to appeal to left-leaning figures in his Renaissance party after controversial pension and immigration reforms.

What about other European countries?

Abortion is currently accessible in more than 40 European nations, but some countries are seeing increased efforts to limit access to the procedure. In September 2022, Hungary's far-right government made it obligatory for women to listen to the pulse of the foetus, sometimes called the "foetal heartbeat," before they can access a safe abortion.

Poland, which has some of the most stringent abortion laws in Europe, allows termination only in the event of rape, incest or a threat to the mother's health or life. Restrictions were further tightened in 2020 when the country's top court ruled that abortions on the grounds of foetal defects were unconstitutional.

The U.K. permits abortion up to 24 weeks of pregnancy if it is approved by two doctors. Delayed abortions are allowed only if there exists a danger to the mother's life. However, women who undergo abortions after 24 weeks can be prosecuted under the Offences Against the Person Act, 1861. Italy resisted Vatican pressure and legalised abortion in 1978 by allowing women to terminate pregnancies up to 12 weeks or later if their health or life was endangered. However, the law allows medical practitioners to register as "conscientious objectors," thereby making access to the procedure extremely difficult.

The French initiative could, however, embolden efforts to add abortion to the European Charter of Fundamental Rights.

What is India's stance on abortion?

India implemented the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act in 1971 to allow licensed medical professionals to perform abortions under specific conditions as long as the pregnancy did not exceed 20 weeks. The Act was further amended in 2021 to permit abortions up to 24 weeks for certain cases.

The opinion of only one registered medical practitioner will be required for the abortion of a foetus up to 20 weeks of gestation. If a pregnancy is 20-24 weeks, the right to seek abortion is determined by two registered medical practitioners but only under certain categories of forced pregnancies, including statutory rape in case of minors or sexual assault; women with disabilities; or when there is a change in the marital status of the woman during pregnancy. After 24 weeks, the Act requires a State-level medical board to be set up in "approved facilities", which may "allow or deny termination of pregnancy" only if there is substantial foetal abnormality.

Why has government issued an AI advisory?

What does the March 1 notification signal to tech firms? Will they need to seek government permission before putting out 'under-tested' Artificial Intelligence models? Why do some in the industry feel this move will hinder innovation?

Aroon Deep

The story so far:

On March 1, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) issued an advisory to the Artificial Intelligence industry. It said that all generative AI products, like large language models on the lines of ChatGPT and Google's Gemini, would have to be made available "with [the] explicit permission of the Government of India" if they are "under-testing/ unreliable".

What is the government's stand?

The advisory represents a starkly different approach to AI research and policy that the government had previously signalled. It came soon after Rajeev Chandrasekhar, the Minister of State for Electronics and Information Technology, reacted sharply to Google's Gemini chatbot, whose response to a query, "Is [Prime Minister Narendra] Modi a fascist?" went viral. Mr. Chandrasekhar said the ambivalent response by the chatbot violated India's IT law.

How has it been received?

The advisory has divided industry and observers on a key question: was this an 'advisory' in the classic sense that was reminding companies of existing legal obligations, or was this a mandate? "It sounds like a mandate," Prasanth Sugathan, Legal Director at the Delhi-based Software Freedom Law Centre said at an event on Thursday. The document, sent to large tech platforms, including Google, instructed recipients to submit an "[a]ction taken-cum-status Report to the Ministry within 15 days." Mr. Chandrasekhar insisted that there were "legal consequences under existing laws (both criminal and tech laws) for platforms that enable or directly output unlawful content," and that the advisory was put out for firms "to be aware that, platforms have clear existing obligations under IT and criminal law." Mr. Chandrasekhar referred to rule 3(1)(b) of the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021, which prohibits unlawful content like defamation, pornography, disinformation and anything that "threatens the unity ... and sovereignty of India." He added that the rules were intended for large tech firms and wouldn't apply to startups.

> 'The advisory is an opportunity in disguise. It points to a need for local AI stacks, datasets, graphics processing units'

The government hasn't elaborated in detail on how IT laws can apply to automated AI systems in this way. Pranesh Prakash, a technology lawyer who is an affiliated fellow at the Yale Law School's Information Society Project, said the advisory was "legally unsound," and compared it to the Draft National Encryption Rules of 2015, a quickly withdrawn proposal to outlaw strong encryption of data in India.

The advisory also included a requirement for AI-generated imagery to be labelled as such, something that the industry has vacillated between taking serious efforts on doing. Amazon Web Services has tried implementing an 'invisible' watermark, but has expressed concern that such a move would be of little use as watermarks can be edited out fairly easily.

Rahul Matthan, a technology lawyer and partner at the firm Trilegal, urged a more permissive approach to AI systems. "In most instances, the only way an invention will get better is if it is released into the wild – beyond the confines of the laboratory in which it was created," Mr. Matthan wrote after the advisory was released. "If we are to have any hope of developing into a nation of innovators, we should grant our entrepreneurs the liberty to make some mistakes without any fear of consequences," he added, pointing to the aviation industry as an example, where he said air safety improved as a result of planemakers' willingness to share information on failure with each other to collectively improve air safety.

GETTY IMAGES

What has been the government's approach to the AI industry?

Until recently, the government itself shared optimism on AI, where Big Tech firms have often struck a balance between seeking regulation and seeking to control the direction these regulations take. The IT Ministry last April categorically said that "the government is not considering bringing a law or regulating the growth of artificial intelligence in the country".

But in the last few months, even before the now viral Gemini response, Mr. Chandrasekhar has expressed dissatisfaction with AI models spitting out uncomfortable responses. "You can't 'trial' a car on the road and when there is an accident say, 'whoops, it is just on trial. You need to sandbox that," Mr. Chandrasekhar said on AI firms' responses to criticism on bias. The tension underlines the conflict inherent to widely testing an experimental technology – which is that wide testing is what allows these often unruly models to detect mistakes and improve. That dynamic was on display when Gemini generated racially incorrect photos of historical events, leading to a storm of criticism that led to the firm pausing the photo generation feature until it worked on a fix.

Will it benefit local developers?

"This is just a poor job in communication, resulting from the need to do something in an election year," Aakrit Vaish, co-founder of Haptik, a conversational AI firm founded in 2013 said on X. Mr. Vaish amplified subsequent clarifications on the advisory's applicability as good news for startups, and sought inputs to collect from local firms to send to the ministry.

Atul Mehra, founder of Vaayushop, an AI finance firm, expressed hope that the advisory could actually translate to a benefit for local developers. While it was a "short term hassle," he conceded on X, "it's a huge opportunity in disguise. It points to [a] need for local AI stacks, datasets, [and] GPUs [graphics processing units] ... Let's keep building and wait for our right moment to even beat Microsoft and Google."

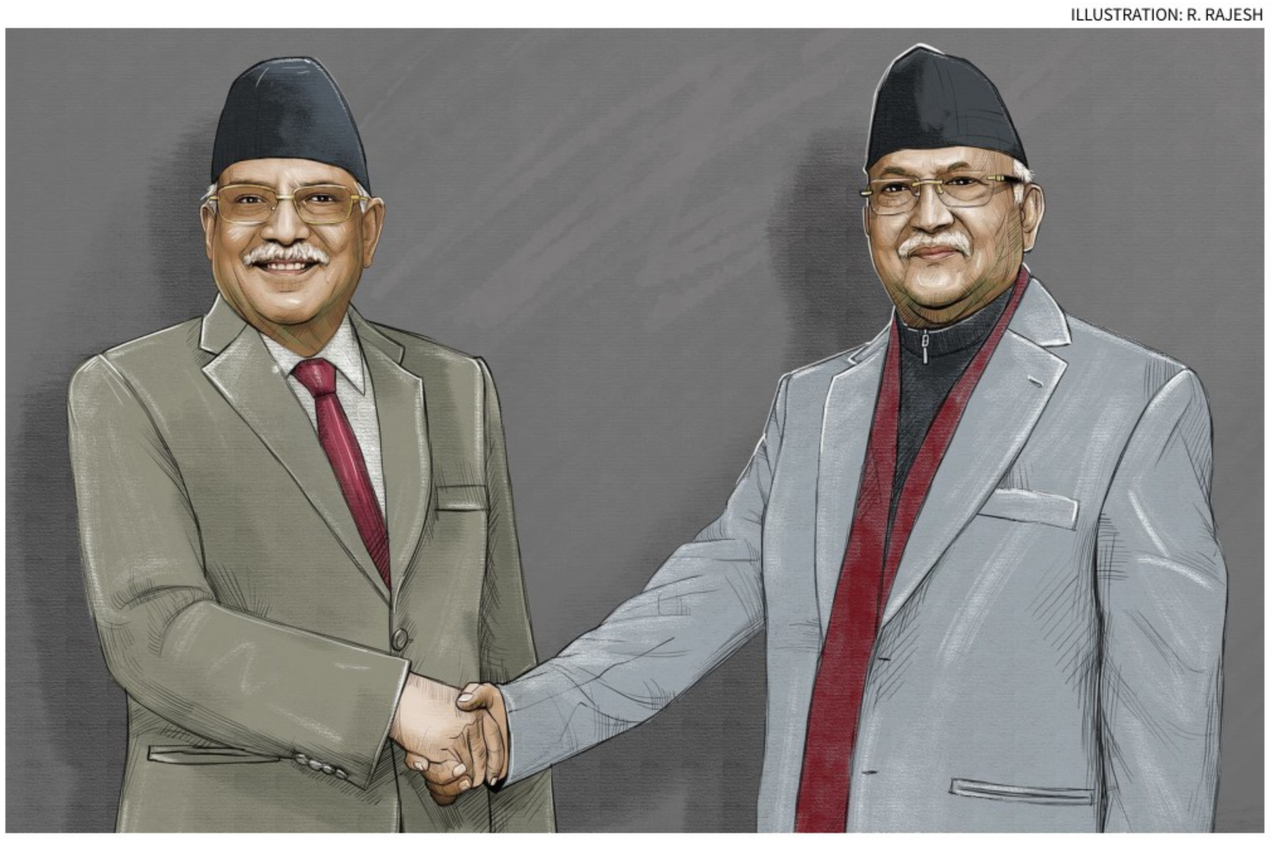
New coalition, old politics

Nepal's Communist bloc

Prime Minister Prachanda forges an alliance with the UML, promising a new beginning, but past experiments of Communist alliances and personality clashes between left leaders suggest there is still a long way to go for unity

Sanjeev Satgainya

ILLUSTRATION: R. RAJESH



Last week, Nepal saw dramatic political developments. On March 4, Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' abruptly ditched the Nepali Congress, his key coalition partner, and joined hands with the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist), or UML. The Nepali Congress, the largest party in the 275-member parliament with 88 seats, has been forced to the other side of the aisle. With the formation of a new Cabinet under Prachanda, also the chairman of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre), a communist-dominated dispensation was back in Kathmandu.

While the abrupt collapse of the Maoist-Congress coalition took many by surprise, signs of cracks in the alliance were visible for some time. On March 7, Prachanda used the parliamentary pulpit to slam the Nepali Congress. He blamed the Nepali Congress's General Committee meeting decisions for irritants between the two parties. The General Committee's discussions on not forging alliances with any party in the next elections and on a proposal against secularism, Prachanda said, were among the reasons that forced him to form a new alliance.

"Above all, people's war was vilified in the reports presented in the Congress meeting," said the Maoist leader, who led a bloody war for 10 years in Nepal from 1996. He also said a dissident group in the Nepali Congress had a role in defeating the Maoist Centre candidate in the National Assembly elections.

The Nepali Congress, on the other side, has described Prachanda's move as political chicanery.

As the blame-game continues, Nepal is witnessing the rise of a Maoist-UML coalition for the second time in recent years; earlier in 2018, the same parties had come together and even merged, only to last three years before imploding.

Self-interest

This time, Prachanda was quick to call his decision to join hands with the UML part of a fresh push to revive Left unity in Nepal. But analysts say the formation of the communist coalition in Kathmandu is more inspired by self-interest – of Prachanda and UML chair K.P. Sharma Oli – than ideology.

"Mr. Prachanda may have laid out multiple reasons for forming a new alliance, but he himself actually is the main reason for the breakup of the Maoist-Congress coalition," said Tula Narayan Shah, a political analyst. "A vindictive Mr. Oli, meanwhile, was desperate; he was unable to digest that Prachanda had abandoned him after being elected Prime Minister with his backing."

After the 2022 general elections, which the Maoist Centre fought in an alliance with the Nepali Congress, Prachanda, whose party won 32 seats, was appointed Prime Minister in December that year with the support of UML, which emerged as the second largest party after the Nepali Congress with 78 seats. However, as is his won't, Prachanda failed to honour the deal signed with the UML. He backed the Nepali Congress presidential candidate, prompting the UML to withdraw support in February last year, paving the way for the formation of the Maoist-Congress alliance.

Mr. Shah says Prachanda gradually realised that there is a lack of convergence between him and Nepali Congress president Sher Bahadur Deuba on government modus operandi. "As the Prime Minister, it was natural for Prachanda to run the government as per his wish, but Deuba had other ideas," Mr. Shah said. "Deuba held the view that as the leader of the largest party and key coalition partner, he also needed to have an equal say, if not more."

That is the reason, according to Mr. Shah, Prachanda, in recent months, was repeatedly saying he was not getting the desired support from Nepali Congress ministers – Finance Minister Prakash Sharan Mahat in particular. Prachanda felt slighted that Mr. Deuba was blocking him from using his prime ministerial prerogative to reshuffle the Cabinet.

Jhalak Subedi, a writer who has closely followed Nepal's Left politics for many years, says had Mr. Deuba let the Prime Minister change some Ministers, the Maoist-Congress coalition could have lasted for the next several months, or even till the next elections.

Cause and effect

When Prachanda visited China in September last year, he was keen on extracting some projects under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), Beijing's flagship infrastructure project spanning across Asia and Europe. Nepal signed up to the BRI in 2017, but not a single project has taken off under the scheme. When Mr. Deuba was Prime Minister before the 2022 elections, he maintained a position that Nepal would not execute any BRI projects under loans.

"Deuba's position remains the same. The Prime Minister had publicly said that he would move the BRI talks forward during his visit, but upon his return from China, he had nothing to show," Mr. Subedi said. "Prachanda found himself concerned by the Nepali Congress for issues like these as well."

The Maoist-Congress breakup, hence was a culmination of internal as well as external factors. A "unified communist force" is something that has captured Nepali communists' imagination for decades. However, their efforts in the past failed due largely to personality clashes between leaders. The 2018 merger between the Maoists and the UML could not last because of the power struggle between Prachanda and Mr. Oli.

Mr. Subedi says both the Maoist Centre and the UML have realised that their political strengths have been on the wane. "Prachanda may have been thinking that siding with the UML ups his party's electoral chances. Mr. Oli, a master manoeuvrer, may be thinking the UML is a big force which can easily swallow the Maoists."

In Kathmandu, the federal government led by Prachanda now has Ministers from the UML, Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP), Janata Samajbadi Party (JSP), and the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Socialist). There is a lack of clarity about political moorings of the RSP, which is a new party with people from different ideologies. The JSP is a left-leaning party, but it does not call itself a communist force.

Mr. Subedi says it would be too early to say the new development would set the Left unity ball in motion. "The Maoist Centre and the UML, however, may stick together till the next elections," he said. According to him, the Nepali Congress may try to stitch up a loose alliance of non-communist forces in the coming days.

Given the way Prachanda and Mr. Oli function, a power struggle between the two within the next few months won't be a surprise, say observers. "Even the Congress and the UML may come together, who knows," says Mr. Shah.

Minendra Rijal, a Nepali Congress leader, said his party should be happy that Prachanda broke the alliance. "This actually paves the way for our party's return to power," he said, in an oblique reference to the argument that Nepal continues to be a hotbed of revolving door politics.

THE GIST

- After the 2022 general elections, which the Maoist Centre fought in an alliance with the Nepali Congress, Prachanda was appointed Prime Minister with the support of UML
- Prachanda failed to honour the deal signed with the UML. He backed the Nepali Congress presidential candidate, prompting the UML to withdraw support in February last year
- After this, Prachanda joined hands with the Congress to form another coalition, which he allowed to fall last week and returned to an alliance with the UML

Wheeling into freedom

G.N. Saibaba

The wheelchair-bound former Delhi University professor, who spent years in jail, was released after he was acquitted of charges under UAPA by the Bombay High Court

Sreeparna Chakrabarty

ILLUSTRATION: SOUMYADIP SINHA

Till 1997, before he came to Delhi, G.N. Saibaba, 90% disabled since the age of 5 years, wore slippers on his hands to move around till he could buy a wheelchair. His hands were very strong then, recalls his wife and childhood friend Vasantha.

But the nearly decade-long incarceration at the Nagpur Central jail have left him a broken man physically. "It is a miracle I am alive", is how he himself summed it after his release. The physical pain, though, has not broken his spirit.

"I am not in a position to sit or speak. I am in shooting pain," he says recalling his days in the "dystopian" cell of Nagpur jail without proper medical care, where he had to be carried to the toilet by fellow prisoners.

Mr. Saibaba had suffered a polio attack when he was five years old.

Born into a poor peasant family in 1967 in Amalapuram in Andhra Pradesh, Gokarakonda Naga Saibaba studied at Sree Konaseema Bhanoji Ramars (SKBR) College in Amalapuram and obtained his Post Graduation in English from the University of Hyderabad. He completed his PhD in Delhi University.

From 2003 till his arrest in 2014, he taught English literature at Delhi University's Ramlal Anand College.

His wife Vasantha recollects how even when they were teenagers, Mr. Saibaba was against patriarchy and opposed setting social norms for women on what to wear, how to behave. This is what drew her to him, she says and "then there was our shared love for literature".

It was possibly this sense of justice towards other people which drew him towards tribal rights. The wheelchair-bound professor was a prominent voice in the campaign against Operation Green Hunt, which was launched in 2009. He was also associated with various organisations like Forum Against War on People. His commitment to human rights is so strong that even while recounting his ordeal in jail he mentions how scores of undertrials are languishing in inhuman conditions.

Mr. Saibaba was first arrested on May 9, 2014 over his alleged links with Maoists. He approached the Bombay High Court, challenging his arrest and was given bail on medical grounds in 2015, but was back in jail again. In 2016, the Supreme Court released him on bail unconditionally. However, in 2017, a trial court in Gadchiroli, Maharashtra, convicted him under sections of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA). Though he challenged his conviction in Mumbai High court, he couldn't get bail due to stringent provisions of UAPA.

'Dodgy evidence'

In October 2022, the Bombay High Court set aside his life imprisonment and concluded that the proceedings before the sessions court were "null and void". But his acquittal was stayed by the Supreme Court, which observed that the High Court could consider the entire evidence in the case as well.

On March 5, 2024, the Bombay High Court observed that the evidence provided by the prosecution in the case against him lacks technical regularity and looks "dodgy". Once again, the High Court acquitted him and he was released on Thursday. However, the Maharashtra government has approached the Supreme Court challenging his acquittal.

The case of the disabled academic who had been lodged in the veritable "Anda" cell also garnered global concern. Several international groups had written to then Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana in June 2022 to immediately grant medical bail to him.

In 2020, citing his "seriously deteriorating" health, a panel of experts with the United Nations OHCHR urged the government to immediately release him. Mary Lawlor, the United Nations special rapporteur on human rights, has last year termed Mr. Saibaba's detention as inhuman, citing grave concerns for his health.

Mr. Saibaba's years in prison have not spared his family which has been managing with financial help from friends and well-wishers. He had been terminated from DU in 2021.

His colleagues now want him to be reinstated and compensated for the lost years of service following his acquittal.

A symbol of defiance

Second Thomas Shoal

Tensions are rising in the South China Sea after Chinese vessels attempted to block a Philippine mission to resupply their troops on the contested reef

Priyali Prakash

REUTERS

Lying in the waters around the Spratly Islands, a derelict ship at the Second Thomas Shoal has become a symbol of the Philippines' defiance in the hotly contested South China Sea. A recent incident in the area, where the Philippines claims that China Coast Guard ships caused two collisions with their boats and water cannoned one of them, has renewed global interest in the flashpoint.

The Philippine vessels were part of a routine mission to deliver provisions to troops stationed on the grounded navy vessel *BRP Sierra Madre* at Second Thomas Shoal.

The incident happened a day after Philippine Foreign Minister Enrique Manalo called on China to "stop harassing us", defending the country's strategy of publicising Chinese manoeuvres in the South China Sea.

The Chinese Coast Guard ships and accompanying vessels blocked the Philippine vessels off the disputed Second Thomas Shoal and executed dangerous manoeuvres that caused two minor collisions between the Chinese ships and two of the Philippine vessels, Philippine officials said. An hour later, another Chinese Coast Guard ship collided with a supply boat the Philippine coast guard was escorting.

A Philippine government task force dealing with territorial disputes said four crew members were injured, and called China's actions "another attempt to illegally impede or obstruct a routine resupply and rotation mission." Similar skirmishes were also reported in December.

The Spratly Islands themselves are claimed by multiple countries in the region, including China, Taiwan, Vietnam, the Philippines, and Malaysia. The Philippines first took possession of the Second Thomas Shoal in the late 1990s, setting an outpost on the drowned *BRP Sierra Madre*. This Second World War-era ship was intentionally grounded by the Philippines to create an outpost for the country and boost the Philippines' claim over the Spratly Islands.

The country continues to maintain its presence there and the ship serves as a military outpost, manned by a small contingent of troops. The Philippines claims that the shoal lies within its exclusive economic zone (EEZ), which, under international law, extends up to 200 nautical miles. The Second Thomas Shoal lies about 108 nautical miles (200 km) from the Philippine island of Palawan.

China's claims

China claims sovereignty over most of the South China Sea, including the Second Thomas Shoal, based on the historical and controversial Nine-dash line. China's claims cut into the EEZs of Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei and Indonesia. In 2013, the Philippines had filed a case against China with the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague, challenging the legality of China's claims and activities in the South China Sea.

The Philippines took China to international court after the latter seized effective control of the Scarborough Shoal in 2012. The court ruled in favour of the Philippines in 2016, but China rejected the judgment.

The incident is concerning for the Philippines since in 1995, when China took over the Mischief Reef, a low-tide elevation located in Spratly Islands that was claimed by the Philippines. The distance between Mischief Reef and Second Thomas Shoal is just 22 nautical miles (around 40 km), and China's presence on the Mischief Reef leaves the Philippines potentially exposed to attacks from its neighbour. In 2022, it was reported that China has "fully militarised at least three of several islands it built in the disputed South China Sea", on Mischief Reef, Subi Reef and Fiery Cross.

The recent flare in tensions between the two countries can be attributed to Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s proximity to the U.S. Experts believe that once the *BRP Sierra Madre* falls apart, China may attempt to take over the Second Thomas Shoal, which will also bring it dangerously close to Palawan Island. One of the military bases that the U.S. gained access to in 2023 is located on the Palawan Island.

INBRIEF

'India added 3.2 GW of open access solar capacity in 2023'

India added a record 3.2 gigawatt of open access solar capacity during 2023, posting a 6.66% rise supported by factors, including reduced module cost, according to a report. In its latest report, U.S.-based research firm Mercom Capital said the open access solar capacity addition was 3 gigawatt (GW) during 2022. Solar power through open access is an arrangement where a power producer establishes a solar power plant to supply green energy to consumers. PTI

'Office space demand likely at 50-55 mn sq. ft. across 6 cities'

Office space demand in India's six major cities will remain healthy this year as domestic and foreign firms are expected to lease 50-55 million square feet to expand businesses, according to a FICCI-Colliers report. Gross leasing of office space stood at 58.2 million sq. ft. across six major cities viz.yBengaluru, Chennai, Delhi-NCR, Hyderabad, Mumbai and Pune. FICCI and real estate consultant Colliers India released the report 'India Office: Repurposed to scale-up'. PTI

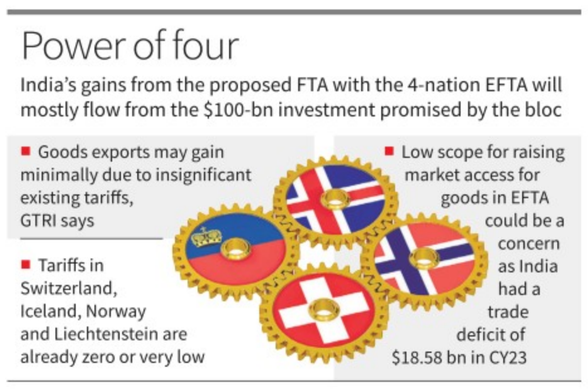
Triumph Offshore spat: NCLT denies interim relief to IFFCO

The National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) has directed Swan Energy-IFFCO JV Triumph Offshore to hold a board meeting before April 4 to discuss issues raised by minority shareholder IFFCO on the feasibility and viability of offering services to operate vessels. Earlier this month, IFFCO moved the NCLT, seeking to restrain Triumph Offshore from passing any resolution without approval and issuing any share/security to the lenders for paying loans. PTI

India to gain higher investments from FTA pact with EFTA

The free trade agreement will showcase India's commitment to trade liberalisation, when the world is turning protectionist, says GTRI

Amiti Sen
NEW DELHI



India's gains from the proposed free trade agreement with the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries, to be signed on Sunday, will have to mostly flow from the $100-billion investment and one million jobs promised by the bloc over 15 years, as goods exports may gain minimally due to insignificant existing tariffs, research body Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) indicated in a report.

New Delhi convinced the EFTA countries, which include Switzerland, Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein, to weave in commitments on minimum investment flow and job creation keeping in mind that the existing goods tariffs in the bloc are already zero or very low, an official told *businessline*.

Trade with Swiss

This is especially true for Switzerland, which accounted for $1.38 billion of the total $1.87 billion of Indian exports to the EFTA in CY2023.

"Since 98% of India's exports to Switzerland are industrial goods already entering at zero tariffs, they won't benefit from the FTA," observed Ajay Srivastava, co-founder, GTRI. "India's agricultural exports are minimal and unlikely to increase significantly due to strict quality standards and non-tariff barriers," Mr. Srivastava pointed out in the report.

The signing ceremony of the proposed pact in New Delhi on March 10, officially called the India-EFTA Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA), is likely to include trade ministers of some EFTA countries as well, such as Norway, apart from Commerce & Industry Minister Piyush Goyal.

Low scope for access

The low scope for increasing market access for goods in EFTA could be of concern as India had a trade deficit of $18.58 billion with the bloc in CY23, with its imports at $20.45 billion. Of this, gold and other precious metals, stones and coins, all imported from Switzerland, accounted for $16.7 billion. Gold, making up 80% of India's imports from Switzerland, is a critical factor, GTRI said.

'Little competition'

The JV areas that the countries have short-listed, where investments are to be made, mostly do not have competition from India, the official said, speaking on the condition of anonymity.

"EFTA has agreed to the condition of investments being made in India because they are getting market access," the official noted. "Also, they are not our competitors in the identified sectors. For instance, in India, most medical devices are imported from China. The pact will lead to diversification of imports, which is absolutely necessary," the official added.

China says overall pressure on employment yet to ease

Reuters
BEIJING

Authorities will strengthen policy support to improve youth employment, bolster small firms

China still faces structural employment issues and the pressure on jobs has not eased, the country's human resources minister said on Saturday, as the slowing economy braces for another record number of college graduates in 2024.

The job market has seen a good start, particularly in artificial intelligence and big data segments, said Human Resources Minister Wang Xiaoping, adding that 32,000 job fairs have been held so far in 2024.

Still, authorities will strengthen policy support to improve youth employment and step up support for small private firms, Ms. Wang told a news conference on the sidelines of an annual parliament meeting in Beijing.

China could see 11.79 million college graduates this year, she added, reiterating an education ministry forecast.

At the start of the session this week, the government unveiled its 2024 target for economic growth, aiming for an expansion of "around 5%". China's gross domestic product grew 5.2% last year.

But headline indicators have tended to underplay the tensions in China's vast job market, especially among young job seekers including the millions of college graduates looking for work each year.

More than one in four of the roughly 100 million Chinese aged 16-24 were unemployed in June 2023.

New MF distributor portability norms to trigger competition

Suresh P. Iyengar
MUMBAI

The new mutual fund (MF) distributor portability norms may leave distributors with no commission during the mandatory cooling-off period of six months, leaving them high and dry, especially if investors trigger multiple switches.

A spin-off effect of the new norms is they will help large distributors poach business from smaller players by offering better services and ease of investment. Investors can now switch between distributors for the same fund if they have concerns about the current distributor or services.

Previously, the new distributor didn't receive trail commission. However, AMFI now permits AMCs to pay trail commission to new distributors when investors switch.

Trail commission

The AMCs may consider making payment of trail commission to the transferee distributor after a 6-month cooling-off period from the date of change of distributor code in the unit holder database.

(*The writer is with The Hindu businessline*)

Johri resigns from ZEEL

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Zee Entertainment Enterprise Ltd. on Saturday announced the resignation of Rahul Johri, who was President-Business, and changes in the revenue vertical of the broadcast business implemented by its MD & CEO Punit Goenka.

Correction

The report 'India four-nation EFTA bloc likely to ink FTA on March 10' published in the March 9 edition erroneously referred to Finland as a member of EFTA. It should instead have read as Iceland. The error is regretted.

Kratos Studios eyes fivefold growth in gamers

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

Kratos Studios, a platform for online games and gamers worldwide, is eyeing fivefold growth in the number of gamers on its platform in 2024, CEO Manish Agarwal said.

"Currently we have a community of over 16 million gamers which we have built without traditional marketing. Our target is to grow this number five times by the end of 2024," said Mr. Agarwal who was former CEO of Nazara Technologies.

The firm currently has about 73 staff in India, Brazil, U.K. and West Asia and plans are afoot to increase the geographical reach.

Godrej Tyson Foods eyes double-digit growth: CEO

Lalatendu Mishra
MUMBAI

Abhay Parnerkar

Godrej Tyson Foods Ltd. (GTFL), the farm-to-fork joint venture company of Godrej and American foods major Tyson Foods, with brands such as 'Real Good Chicken' and frozen ready-to-cook brand 'Yummiez', said it would clock double-digit growth in FY24 while maintaining a volume growth of 16% year-on-year (y-o-y) for its processed and branded products business.

Having achieved the milestone of surpassing the turnover of ₹1,000 crore with a 28% growth in revenue compared with the previous year GTFL said in the third quarter of FY24 it sustained 15% y-o-y volume growth for branded businesses, including Godrej Yummiez and Real Good Chicken.

Better profitability

The firm said it had been scaling back on poultry trading and focusing on branded businesses for better profitability.

For the nine months of FY24, the overall branded business revenue comprising of Godrej Yummiez and Real Good Chicken stood at ₹454 crore with a growth rate of 12% YoY.

"As we scale back on poultry trading, I think next year and the year after that, we believe the two processed businesses of Real Good Chicken and Yummiez frozen snacks business will continue double-digit growth trajectory," said Abhay Parnerkar, CEO, Godrej Tyson Foods Ltd. in a interview.

Tapping on the demand for fried chicken, GTFL via its frozen ready-to-cook brand Godrej Yummiez introduced Crispy Fried Chicken that can be made at home in 5-7 minutes.

"Factors such as the rising popularity of ready-to-cook and value-added chicken products are driving up chicken consumption," he added.

Sterling Tool's E-Mobility arm to expand capacity, produce multiple EV parts: MD

Lalatendu Mishra
MUMBAI

Switching on: The firm is now looking at all power electronics going into an electric vehicle. COMPANY WEBSITE

Sterling Gtake E-Mobility, the electric vehicle (EV) component manufacturing subsidiary of Sterling Tools Ltd., is expanding capacity to manufacture six lakh EV components a year by March compared with 4.5 lakh now, MD Jaideep Wadhwa said.

"We produce over 1,500 Motor Control Units a day and sell them to a variety of customers in India," Mr. Wadhwa told *The Hindu*. "And now this business is stabilised, we are looking at other components of the EV powertrain we want to get into and are working on doing that," he added.

Stating there were very few components in an EV, he said the company, having established the infrastructure and ecosystem for power electronics, was now looking at all of the power electronics going into an EV as also how it can enter into those segments.

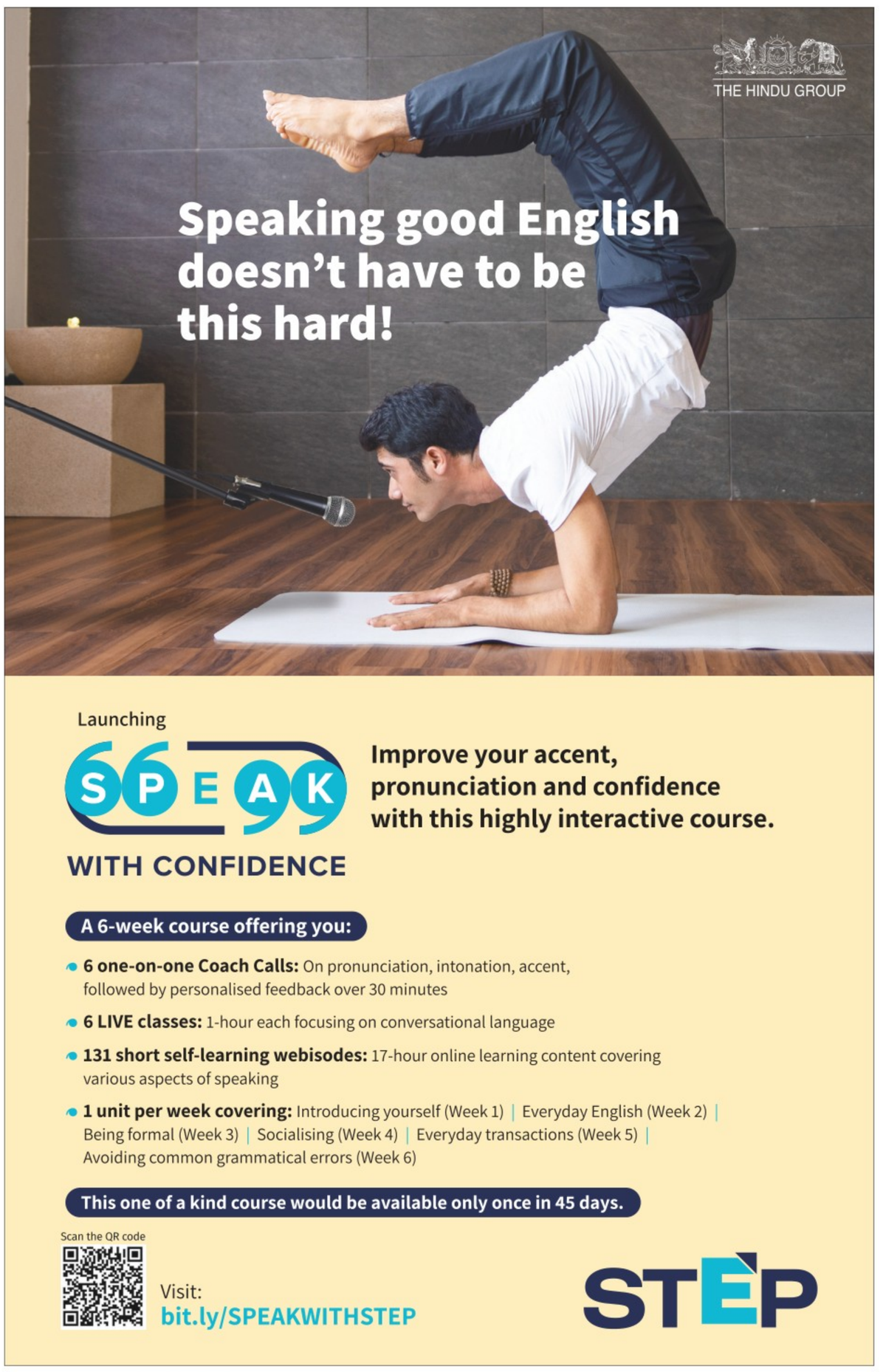
"Our intention is to be a comprehensive electric powertrain component supplier," he added.

The parent company Sterling Tools Ltd. is one of the largest manufacturers of fasteners in the country. Now that ICE vehicles would be gradually replaced by vehicles running on alternative fuel, the EV subsidiary was set up to explore opportunities in this emerging space.

Future of mobility

"Starting about 2018, we started looking at the future of mobility, which people define as ACES – Autonomous, Connected, Electric and Shared.

"So, we started recognising the industry was evolving from the ICE and a largely mechanical architecture to an electrical and electronics architecture. The connected, electric, shared, autonomous type of environment."



DUBLIN

Ireland referendum on family and women's roles defeated: Varadkar

REUTERS

A dual referendum in Ireland on redefining family and women's roles in the constitution has been defeated, Prime Minister Leo Varadkar said. The government supported the proposed changes, which would have widened the definition of the family and clarified out-dated language about the duties of women in society. AFP

TEHRAN

Iran slams Meta's removal of Khamenei's social media accounts

GETTY IMAGES

Iran denounced Meta's decision to remove the Facebook and Instagram accounts of its supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, calling it a "violation of freedom of expression". Meta said last month it removed his accounts for having "repeatedly violated" its policy on "dangerous organisations and individuals". AFP

FLORIDA

Hungary's PM Orban supports Trump after Florida meeting

AFP

Hungary's right-wing nationalist Prime Minister Viktor Orban lent his support to his long-time ally Donald Trump's bid to return to White House after meeting the former U.S. President in Florida late on Friday. Orban has said only the return of Republican candidate Trump to the White House could bring peace in Ukraine. REUTERS

ANKARA

Turkiye openly talks to Hamas leaders and back them: Erdogan

REUTERS

Turkish President Recep Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on Saturday Ankara "firmly backs" Palestinian militant group Hamas. "No one can make us qualify Hamas as a terrorist organisation," he said in a speech in Istanbul. "Turkiye is a country that speaks openly with Hamas leaders and firmly backs them," he added. AFP

Asif Ali Zardari becomes Pakistan's 14th President

The PPP leader secured 225 votes from the newly anointed electoral college; he becomes the only civilian leader of the country to win a second term; he is husband of slain PM Benazir Bhutto

Press Trust of India
ISLAMABAD/LAHORE

Asif Ali Zardari was overwhelmingly elected as the 14th President of Pakistan on Saturday, becoming the only civilian President of the coup-prone country for a second time.

Mr. Zardari, the co-chairperson of the Pakistan Peoples Party, was the joint candidate of the ruling alliance of the PPP and the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N).

His rival, Mahmood Khan Achakzai, is the head of his Pashtoonkhwa Milli Awami Party (PkMAP). He was fielded by jailed former Prime Minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party and backed by the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC).

New innings: Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, left, meets with Asif Ali Zardari in Islamabad on Saturday. AP

Mr. Zardari is expected to be sworn in on Sunday.

Mr. Zardari, 68, received 255 votes while his opponent got 119 votes in the National Assembly and the Senate. The new President was elected by the electoral college of the newly elected members of the National Assembly and the four provincial Assemblies, which formed the electoral college.

A businessman-turned-politician, Mr. Zardari is the husband of slain Pakistan Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto.

Mr. Zardari has been haunted by his shady past due to his alleged involvement in cases of mega corruption during the two terms of his wife as Prime Minister. He was implicated in many cases of corruption, but he was neither convicted nor lost his trademark smile, and, ultimately, he was cleared in all cases.

Israel strikes landmark residential tower in Rafah

Reuters
CAIRO/RAFAH

Israel struck one of the largest residential towers in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip on March 9, residents said, stepping up pressure on the last area of the enclave it has not yet invaded and where over a million displaced Palestinians are sheltering.

The 12-floor building, located some 500m from the border with Egypt, was damaged in the strike. Dozens of families were made homeless though no casualties were reported, according to residents.

One of the tower's 300 residents said that Israel gave them a 30-minute warning to flee the building at night.

A Rafah-based official with the Fatah party said he feared that hitting the Rafah tower was a sign of an imminent Israeli invasion.

Battered building: Debris is seen around a damaged Al-Masry Tower after Israeli air strikes in Rafah on Saturday. GETTY IMAGES

Nearly 31,000 dead

Five months into Israel's war on Gaza, health authorities said nearly 31,000 Palestinians had been killed, over 72,500 were wounded and thousands were trapped under rubble.

Three Palestinian children died of dehydration and malnutrition at the northern Al Shifa Hospital overnight.

Negotiations on a ceasefire and the release of 134 hostages still in Gaza seemed to stall ahead of the hoped-for deadline, the Muslim holy month of Ramzan, which begins on or around March 10.

Red Cross chief decries 'lack of humanity'

Agence France-Presse
GENEVA

The war in Gaza has "ruptured any sense of a shared humanity," the head of the International Committee of the Red Cross said on Saturday. ICRC head Mirjana Spoljaric called for an urgent ceasefire in Gaza, saying Israel and Hamas must respect international law and protect civilians caught up in their conflict.

She said that getting a steady, substantial flow of desperately needed aid into the besieged Palestinian territory – where the UN says more than 90% of the population is on the brink of famine – was "only part of the solution".

"Preserving civilian life and health is the rule, not the exception," she said.

NATO troops in Ukraine 'not unthinkable': Polish Minister

Associated Press
WARSAW

Poland's Foreign Minister says the presence of NATO forces "is not unthinkable" and that he appreciates the French President for not ruling out that idea.

Radek Sikorski made the observation during a discussion marking the 25th anniversary of Poland's accession to NATO in the Polish parliament on Friday, and the Foreign Ministry posted the comments on X.

They reflect a larger European debate over how to help Ukraine as Russia has gained some momentum on the battlefield and Kyiv is running low on ammunition.

Radek Sikorski

Last month French President Emmanuel Macron said the possibility of Western troops in Ukraine could not be ruled out.

The Kremlin has warned that if NATO sends combat troops, a direct conflict between the alliance and Russia would be inevitable. Russian President Vladimir Putin said such a move would risk a global nuclear conflict.

Poland's Prime Minister Donald Tusk was among those European leaders who initially ruled out sending troops to Ukraine after Macron's remarks, saying: "Poland does not plan to send its troops to the territory of Ukraine."

But less than two weeks later Mr. Sikorski struck a different tone.

Haiti grinds to a 'standstill' as gangs run amok

Agence France-Presse
PORT-AU-PRINCE

Sporadic gunfire rang out in Port-au-Prince on Friday night, as residents desperately sought shelter amid the recent explosion of gang violence in the Haitian capital.

Humanitarian conditions continued to deteriorate, and aid groups and NGOs have warned of a shortage of medical resources and food supplies after armed groups unleashed widespread chaos on the long-troubled Caribbean nation last week.

Gunshots were heard throughout the capital late on Friday, especially concentrated in the southwestern districts of Turgeau, Pacot, Lalue and Canape-Vert.

Impending death: A man transports a coffin using a wheelbarrow in Port-au-Prince in Haiti on Friday. AP

Criminal groups, which already control much of Port-au-Prince as well as roads leading to the rest of the country, have attacked key infrastructure in recent days, including two prisons, allowing the majority of their 3,800 inmates to escape.

The gangs, along with some ordinary Haitians, are seeking the resignation of Prime Minister Ariel Henry, who was due to leave office in February but instead agreed to a power-sharing deal with the opposition until new elections are held.

On Thursday, the government issued a month-long state of emergency for the western region, which includes the capital, and decreed a nighttime curfew until Monday.

Haiti's airport remained closed on Friday, while the main port cited instances of looting since it suspended services on Thursday.

"If we cannot access those containers (full of food), Haiti will go hungry soon," the NGO Mercy Corps warned in a statement.

Pregnant women at risk

The UN warned on Friday that thousands of people, especially pregnant women, are in danger of losing vital health care as the crisis drags on.

"If greater Port-au-Prince remains at a standstill in the coming weeks, almost 3,000 pregnant women could be denied access to essential health care," the UN's office in Haiti said in a statement.

The body also warned that more than 500 sexual violence survivors could be without medical care by the end of March.

Sport

After Henry's heroics, Latham and Williamson lift the Kiwis

AUS IN NZ

Agence France-Presse
CHRISTCHURCH

A timely return to form by New Zealand opener Tom Latham hauled the Black Caps back into the second Test against Australia on Saturday as it overhauled a 94-run deficit to lead by 40 at stumps.

Latham, dropped by Alex Carey on 59, was unbeaten on 65 in New Zealand's second innings at the Hagley Oval, exactly a year after his last half-century against Sri Lanka at the same ground.

Following the early dismissal of Will Young for one, Latham and Kane Williamson added 105 runs for the second wicket.

Cleaned up: Green has no clue to this beauty from Henry. AFP

Williamson, celebrating his 100th Test, reached his half-century with a single off Mitchell Starc, but faced only two more balls before he edged a Pat Cummins delivery onto his middle stump.

Australia was all out midway through the day with Marnus Labuschagne's masterful 90 laying the foundation for its first innings 256, in reply to New Zealand's 162.

With the pitch becoming more benign than it was when 21 wickets fell in the first five sessions, Latham and Williamson produced a morale-boosting century stand for New Zealand, which had struggled against Australia's intimidating attack.

The scores:
New Zealand 162 & 134/2 (Tom Latham 65 batting, Kane Williamson 51) vs Australia 256 (Marnus Labuschagne 90, Matt Henry 7/67).

BCCI's incentive scheme for Test cricketers

Amol Karhadkar
MUMBAI

Days after excluding two top cricketers from its annual retention list, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has introduced an incentive scheme for India's men's Test cricketers.

According to the scheme, players who feature in at least 75% of the Test matches in the annual cycle stand to earn ₹60 lakh per Test match.

While Jay Shah, the BCCI secretary, announced the initiative through his personal social media handle on Saturday afternoon, president Roger Binny through a BCCI statement hailed it as an attempt to ensure Test cricket's position as the pinnacle of the sport. "This initiative aligns with our vision of promoting Test cricket as the pinnacle of the sport," Binny stated.

With the new scheme, A player who plays at least 75% of India's Test matches in its annual cycle treated from October to September will earn a whopping ₹45 lakh per match in addition to the Test match-fees of ₹15 lakh.

The players who feature in the 50-75% games bracket will earn a bonus of ₹30 lakh per match. The non-playing members – if selected in the squad – will be paid half the amount. Shah added that the statement will underline the importance of Test cricket and cricketers.

United secures a much-need win; Kane keeps Bayern in the hunt

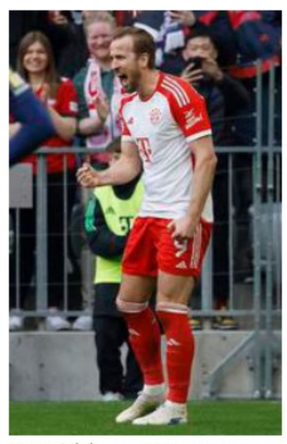
EURO LEAGUES

Associated Press
MANCHESTER

Bruno Fernandes and Marcus Rashford converted first-half penalties as Manchester United beat Everton 2-0 on Saturday to recover from back-to-back Premier League losses that had jeopardised its Champions League qualification hopes.

Lamine Yamal curled in a second-half goal to grab Barcelona a 1-0 win over Mallorca on Friday, lifting the Spanish league holder into second place.

In Bundesliga, Harry Kane scored a hat-trick as Bayern Munich thumped Mainz 8-1. Kane equalled a 60-year-old record and kept alive his team's hopes of catching leader Bayer Leverkusen.



Hat-trick hero... Kane REUTERS

Kane now has 30 goals in his first season in Munich colours, equalling the record for a maiden campaign set by German legend Uwe Seeler for Hamburg in 1963-64.

The results:

Premier League: Manchester United 2 (Fernandes 12-pen, Rashford 36-pen) bt Everton 0.

LaLiga: Valencia 1 (Duro 40) bt Getafe 0.

Bundesliga: Bayern Munich 8 (Kane 13, 45+7, 70, Goretzka 19, 90+2, Mueller 47, Musiala 61, Gnabry 66) bt Mainz 1 (Amiri 31); Leipzig 2 (Isherwood 3-og, Baumgartner 50) bt Darmstadt 0; Moenchengladbach 3 (Honorat 32, Hack 71, 73) drew with Cologne 3 (Alidou 7, 64, Downs 79); Augsburg 1 (Gouweleeuw 22) bt Heidenheim 0.

On Friday: LaLiga: Barcelona 1 (Yamal 73) bt Mallorca 0.

Serie A: Napoli 1 (Kvaratskhelia 61) drew with Torino 1 (Sanabria 64).

Bundesliga: Stuttgart 2 (Guirassy 19, Fuehrich 65) bt Union Berlin 0.

ONE MORE TO THE KITTY

Ashwin overtakes Kumble's tally of five-fors

R.V. MOORTHY

Ace India off-spinner R. Ashwin, who took five for 77 and finished with match-figures of nine for 128 in his 100th Test, also completed his 36th five-wicket haul in the final match of the series against England on Saturday. In the process, Ashwin surpassed compatriot and legendary leg-spinner Anil Kumble's tally of 35 five-fors.

FIRST IMPRESSION

Anderson's control over the ball looked special: Tendulkar

R.V. MOORTHY

Indian batting legend Tendulkar wrote on his official 'X' handle, "The first time I saw Anderson play was in Australia in 2002, and his control over the ball looked special. Nasser Hussain spoke very highly of him back then and today, I am sure, he would say, "*Maine bola tha*" — that he had called it so early."

TIGHTENING THE GRIP

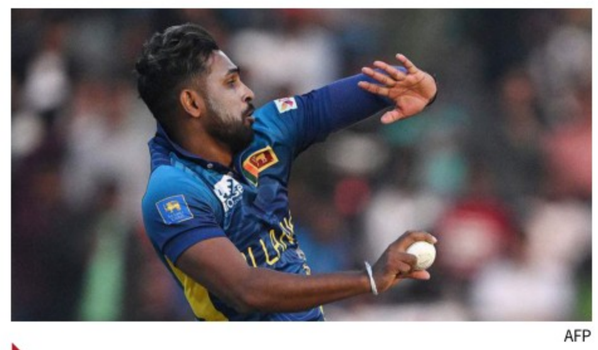
India consolidates the top spot in WTC rankings

R.V. MOORTHY

The Rohit Sharma-led Indian team consolidated its top position in the World Test Championship rankings after a 4-1 series win over England in Dharamshala on Saturday. India improved from 64.58 to 68.51% points after nine matches in the current WTC cycle (won six, lost two and drew one). New Zealand, with 60% points, is second.

BRILLIANT SPELL

Thushara's hat-trick hands Lanka series win over Bangladesh



AFP

Nuwan Thushara's maiden over hat-trick (five for 20) and Kusal Mendis' 86 helped Sri Lanka pummel Bangladesh in Saturday's Twenty20 in Sylhet. **The scores:** Sri Lanka 174/7 in 20 overs (K. Mendis 86) bt Bangladesh 146 in 19.4 overs (R. Hossain 53, N. Thushara 5/20). Sri Lanka wins series 2-1.

India signs off series with innings win for a 4-1 rout

Anderson's 700 and Ashwin's five-for highlight the day; England's self-destructive methods make it easier for the home team; Root plays a lone hand with a polished 84

ENGLAND IN INDIA

Rakesh Rao
DHARAMSHALA

The predictable happened swiftly. Under two sessions on the third day of the fifth Test here, India completed the demolition job of the surprisingly-willing Englishmen for a 4-1 series triumph.

After an embarrassing loss in the first Test, despite taking a 190-run lead, India turned the script around to win the next four. But none of India's triumphs was as dominating as the one on Saturday, the margin being an innings and 64 runs.

For the record, India resumed its first innings and folded at 477 after losing overnight not outs, Man-of-the-Match Kuldeep Yadav and Jasprit Bumrah for the additional of four runs.

Grand show: The Indians are a happy bunch after stamping their authority over the Englishmen in unequivocal terms. R.V. MOORTHY

Trailing by 259 runs, England was never in the hunt to save an innings loss. It lost five wickets before lunch and the rest in the second session to be cleaned up for just 195.

On a day when 41-year-old James Anderson, in his 187th Test, became the first fast bowler to take 700 Test wickets, R. Ashwin picked up five wickets to tally nine for 128 in his 100th Test.

Inexplicable was England's rush to defeat. Beginning its second innings in the seventh session of a Test, the haste of the visiting batters to play the big shots was baffling. Hit firmly between the ears by the Indian spinners in the first innings, England showed that it had not learnt any lesson. The false bravado only hastened the end and left England in very poor light in the shortest of the five Tests.

When England batted again, Ashwin started from where he left off after taking the last four first-innings wickets. He sent back the top three batters before lunch as England reeled at 103 for five.

Ashwin bowled Ben Duckett, Ben Stokes and Ben Foakes by foxing each one differently. Duckett stepped out, got himself 'yorked' as the ball turned just enough to beat his heave and crashed into the off-stump.

Following a change of ends, Ashwin dismissed Stokes. Guilty of playing from the crease, falling to Bumrah and the turning ball in the series, he played forward defensively but was beaten and bowled. After lunch, Foakes paid the price for his attempted slog-sweep and gave the off-spinner a 36th five-wicket haul.

Jonny Bairstow, also playing his 100th Test, smashed three sixes and two of his three boundaries off Ashwin before being dismissed by Kuldeep.

Joe Root stood amid the ruins to post his 61st Test half-century during the ninth-wicket stand with Shoaib Bashir. He displayed the approach England needed to stay alive to fight another day. He was last out for 84, holing out to Bumrah off Kuldeep, the man who started the procession of England's wickets in the first innings.

SCOREBOARD

ENGLAND — 1ST INNINGS:
218 in 57.4 overs

INDIA — 1ST INNINGS
Yashasvi Jaiswal st. Foakes b Bashir 57 (*58b, 5x4, 3x6*), Rohit Sharma b Stokes 103 (*162, 13x4, 3x6*), Shubman Gill b Anderson 110 (*150b, 12x4, 5x6*), Devdutt Padikkal b Bashir 65 (*103b, 10x4, 1x6*), Sarfaraz Khan c Root b Bashir 56 (*60b, 8x4, 1x6*), Ravindra Jadeja lbw b Hartley 15 (*50b*), Dhruv Jurel c Duckett b Bashir 15 (*24b, 2x4*), R. Ashwin b Hartley 0 (*5b*), Kuldeep Yadav c Foakes b Anderson 30 (*69b, 2x4*), Jasprit Bumrah st. Foakes b Bashir 20 (*64b, 2x4*); Extras (lb-4, nb-2): 6; Total (in 124.1 overs): 477.

FALL OF WICKETS
1-104 (Jaiswal, 20.4), 2-275 (Rohit, 61.1), 3-279 (Gill, 62.2), 4-376 (Sarfaraz, 84.1), 5-403 (Padikkal, 92.1), 6-427 (Jurel, 100.4), 7-427 (Jadeja, 101.1), 8-428 (Ashwin, 101.6), 9-477 (Kuldeep, 123.4).

ENGLAND BOWLING
Anderson 16-2-60-2, Wood 15-1-89-0, Hartley 39-3-126-2, Bashir 46.1-5-173-5, Stokes 5-1-17-1, Root 3-0-8-0.

ENGLAND — 2ND INNINGS
Zak Crawley c Sarfaraz b Ashwin 0 (*16b*), Ben Duckett b Ashwin 2 (*5b*), Ollie Pope c Jaiswal b Ashwin 19 (*23b, 3x4*), Joe Root c Bumrah b Kuldeep 84 (*128b, 12x4*), Jonny Bairstow lbw b Kuldeep 39 (*31b, 3x4, 3x6*), Ben Stokes b Ashwin 2 (*10b*), Ben Foakes b Ashwin 8 (*17b*), Tom Hartley lbw b Bumrah 20 (*24b, 4x4*), Mark Wood lbw b Bumrah 0 (*2b*), Shoaib Bashir b Jadeja 13 (*29b, 3x4*), James Anderson (not out) 0 (*5b*); Extras (b-6, lb-1, nb-1): 8, Total (in 48.1 overs): 195.

FALL OF WICKETS
1-2 (Duckett, 1.5), 2-21 (Crawley, 5.3), 3-36 (Pope, 9.2), 4-92 (Bairstow, 17.4), 5-103 (Stokes, 22.5), 6-113 (Foakes, 26.4), 7-141 (Hartley, 34.2), 8-141 (Wood, 34.4), 9-189 (Bashir, 45.5).

INDIA BOWLING
Bumrah 10-2-38-2, Ashwin 14-0-77-5, Jadeja 9-1-25-1, Kuldeep 14.1-0-40-2, Siraj 1-0-8-0.

PoM: Kuldeep; **PoS:** Jaiswal

India won by an innings and 64 runs to clinch five match series 4-1.

Our experience in bowling was critical: Dravid

Rakesh Rao
DHARAMSHALA

With the series done and dusted, it was time for coach Rahul Dravid and England's skipper Ben Stokes, here on Saturday, to reflect on the five-Test series.

After India's emphatic innings-and-64-run victory on the third day, Dravid shared his views.

"We dominated this match. We were in control here all the way. But the first four Tests, there were periods when they did put us under a little bit of pressure."

"There were days, particularly the third day in both Rajkot and in Ranchi, when England had the ascendancy in the morning. The heartening thing for me was how well our experienced players stepped up in those situations. England came here with an experienced batting lineup. Their inexperience was in bowling. . Our experience was in bowling and we won those contests. That was a critical part of the series."

On his part, Stokes said, "We came here with very high hopes and confidence about what we could achieve.

"It started off very well but obviously losing the series 4-1, not just myself but the team is big enough to say we've been completely outplayed in the last four games. Whenever we managed to wrestle back any type of momentum with the ball or bat, India were always able to then put it back on to us."

Wicket No. 700... and Anderson is not done yet

Rakesh Rao
DHARAMSHALA

With the snow-capped Dhauladhar mountain ranges providing a stunning backdrop here, James Anderson, 41, scaled 'Mount 700' to permanently etch his name among the greats of the game.

Precisely 15 minutes into the third day's play on Saturday, the dismissal of Kuldeep Yadav signalled the end of Anderson's wait. The ball kissed the outside edge of Kuldeep's bat and wicketkeeper Ben Foakes completed the dismissal. This was the moment of the day for Anderson, England and their supporters.

On his debut against Zimbabwe in May 2003, Anderson began his wicket-tally by bowling Mark Vermeulen at Lord's and gradually became the most reliable new-ball weapon in the English armoury.

Third to reach the mark

Playing his 187th Test, Anderson became only the third bowler – following spinners Muttiah Muralitharan (800) and Shane Warne (708) – to take 700 Test wickets.

Since surpassing Australian Glenn McGrath's career-tally of 563 wickets when he dismissed Mohammad Shami at The Oval in September 2018, Anderson remains the highest Test wicket-taker among fast bowlers.

The main reason for Anderson's longevity in Tests is his decision to stay focused on red-ball cricket.

He played the last of his 194 ODIs against Afghanistan in March 2015 and finished with 269 wickets.

In fact, his T20 career lasted just 19 matches for 18 wickets and ended in 2009. In Test cricket, Anderson has three 10-wicket match-hauls and 32 five-wicket performances.

These numbers could change since Anderson is not done yet.

Anderson's path to Mount 700

James Anderson became the first fast bowler in the history of Test cricket to reach 700 wickets. Here is the list of his milestones along the way starting from his first wicket

1st wkt.: 1st Test, Mark Vermeulen (Zim), Lord's, May 2003

100th: 29th, Jacques Kallis (SA), The Oval, Aug. 2008

200th: 55th, Peter Siddle (Aus), Perth, Dec. 2010

300th: 81st, Peter Fulton (NZ), Lord's, May 2013

400th: 104th, Martin Guptill (NZ), Headingley, May 2015

500th: 129th, Kraigg Brathwaite (WI), Lord's, Sept. 2017

600th: 156th, Azhar Ali (Pak), Southampton, Aug. 2020.

700th: 187th, Kuldeep Yadav (Ind), Dharamshala, March 2024

700 test wickets is a stellar achievement. A fast bowler playing for 22 years and performing so consistently to be able to take 700 wickets would have sounded like fiction until Anderson actually made it happen. Simply magnificent!
TENDULKAR

Jimmy coming up to 700 wickets, it's phenomenal to think about, especially as a seam bowler. Amazing career to date, and I can't see him stopping. I have played with Jimmy for a long time and I've never seen him as physically fit as he does right now. Being 41, showing that hunger and desire to get better every single day is testament to his attitude and commitment to the game
STOKES

Mooney and Hemalatha's efforts in vain as Harmanpreet's blitzkrieg takes MI home

WPL SEASON 2

Lavanya L
NEW DELHI

Picture this. You are chasing 191 to win. Two of your marquee players have brought the ask down from 70 runs needed off 26 balls to 23 needed off the last 12. Just as the nervous energy peaks in the stadium, the sprinkler system comes on.

This was how bizarre proceedings were at the Arun Jaitley Stadium here in what turned out to be a humdinger between Mumbai Indians and Gujarat Giants. Harmanpreet Kaur (95 n.o, 48b, 10x4, 5x6) was a player possessed as she carried MI to a memorable seven-wicket win.

Positive start

Yastika Bhatia (49, 36b, 8x4, 1x6) and Hayley Matthews began positively, but the Giants made early inroads. Shabnam Shakil snapped up Nat Sciver-Brunt for her maiden WPL wicket, leaving MI with a little over 90 runs to get with 6.3 overs left.

Mooney tried her best to contain Harmanpreet, who was already riled up courtesy some sloppy fielding from her teammates, but in vain.

A 19-run over from Meghna Singh helped the 35-year-old sink her teeth into the wicket. With the equation down to 65 from 24, Harmanpreet maximised a Shabnam over to get 18 runs on the board with Kerr, after which she took Sneh Rana to the cleaners, scoring 24 runs from the 18th over.

Power-hitting: Harmanpreet's scintillating knock of 95 included 10 fours and five maximums.
SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

As the match reached its boiling point, the irrigation system by the boundary cushions came on. Mooney refused to play on a wet outfield prompting an eight-minute delay in the proceedings.

However, Harmanpreet and Kerr managed the unthinkable with a ball to spare.

Harmanpreet's incensed avatar which helped her side pull off the highest chase in WPL history, eclipsed a spectacular partnership between Mooney (66, 35b, 8x4, 3x6) and D. Hemalatha (74, 40b, 9x4, 2x6).

The pair stitched a 121-run stand in just 62 balls, propelling Giants towards a 200-plus score.

However, a choke by the middle and lower-order saw Giants finish with 190, a score that would ultimately melt before the wrath of the Indian captain.

SCOREBOARD

GUJARAT GIANTS
Laura Wolvaardt b Matthews 13 (*14b, 3x4*), Beth Mooney b Sajana 66 (*35b, 8x4, 3x6*), D. Hemalatha c Amanjot b Ismail 74 (*40b, 9x4, 2x6*), Phoebe Litchfield c Harmanpreet b Saika 3 (*4b*), Ashleigh Gardner b Pooja 1 (*3b*), Bharti Fulmali (not out) 21 (*13b, 1x4, 1x6*), Kathryn Bryce run out 7 (*8b, 1x4*), Sneh Rana c Amanjot b Saika 1 (*2b*), Tanuja Kanwar (not out) 0 (*1b*); Extras (lb-3, w-1): 4; Total (for seven wkts. in 20 overs): 190.

FALL OF WICKETS
1-18 (Wolvaardt, 2.5 overs), 2-139 (Mooney, 13.1), 3-152 (Litchfield, 14.3), 4-159 (Gardner, 15.4), 5-163 (Hemalatha, 16.4), 6-179 (Bryce, 18.6), 7-181 (Sneh, 19.3).

MUMBAI INDIANS BOWLING
Matthews 3-0-22-1, Ismail 4-0-30-1, Saika 4-0-31-2, Sciver-Brunt 2-0-23-0, Pooja 4-0-45-1, Amanjot 1-0-10-0, Kerr 1-0-15-0, Sajana 1-0-11-1.

MUMBAI INDIANS
Yastika Bhatia c & b Gardner 49 (36b, 8x4, 1x6), Hayley Matthews c Sneh b Tanuja 18 (21b, 4x4), Nat Sciver-Brunt c Sneh b Shabnam 2 (4b), Harmanpreet Kaur (not out) 95 (48b, 10x4, 5x6), Amelia Kerr (not out) 12 (10b, 1x6); Extras (b-4, lb-4, w-7): 15; Total (for three wkts. in 19.5 overs): 191.

FALL OF WICKETS
1-50 (Matthews, 6.3), 2-57 (Sciver-Brunt, 7.3), 3-98 (Yastika, 13.3).

GIANTS BOWLING
Gardner 3.5-0-22-1, Bryce 2-0-24-0, Tanuja 4-0-21-1, Meghna 3-0-37-0, Shabnam 3-0-31-1, Sneh 4-0-48-0.

Toss: Gujarat Giants.

Mumbai Indians won by seven wickets with one ball to spare.

Sunday's match: Delhi Capitals vs. Royal Challengers, 7.30 p.m.

INBRIEF

Maini grabs F2 Saudi Arabian GP pole, first Indian to do so

Invicta Racing's Kush Maini on Saturday grabbed pole in the F2 Saudi Arabian Grand Prix at Jeddah to become the first Indian to achieve the feat. He is currently fifth with 27 points. Zane Maloney leads the table with 47 points. Maini had claimed pole in the first round but was later disqualified and started the race from the back of the grid due to technical issues. He eventually finished seventh and was able to garner points.

Dipa fourth in women's vault at Apparatus World Cup

India's Dipa Karmakar finished fourth in women's vault at the ongoing Apparatus World Cup in Baku. Dipa, who finished fourth in vault at the 2016 Rio Olympics, scored 13.716 points. Bulgaria's Valentina Georgieva won the gold while Korea's Ok An Chang took the silver. Panama's Karla Navas finished third.

Hussamuddin goes down to Jude Gallagher

World championships bronze medallist Mohammad Hussamuddin lost 0-4 to Commonwealth Games champion Jude Gallagher of Ireland in a round-of-32 bout in the first World Olympic boxing qualifier at Busto Arsizio, Italy, late on Friday. Hussamuddin, who made a comeback to competitive boxing after knee surgery, got a first round bye but had to taste defeat to a superior opponent. Gallagher won the three rounds 5-0, 3-2 and 4-1 to move into the round-of-16. The Indian, who conceded a point due to a warning, was the eighth out of nine from the country to be shown the exit door. Nishant Dev (71kg) will face Christos Karaitis of Greece in the pre-quarterfinals on Sunday.

LIVE TELECAST

Ranji Trophy: (final), day 1, Sports 18-1 (SD & HD) & Jio Cinema App, 9.30 a.m.

Serie A: Jio Cinema App, 5, 7.30 p.m.; Sports 18-1 (SD & HD) & Jio Cinema App, 10.30 p.m. & 1.15 a.m. (Monday)

Premier League: SS Select 1 (SD & HD) & Hotstar, 6.30, 7.30 & 9.15 p.m.

LaLiga: Jio Cinema App, 6.30. 8.45 p.m.; Sports 18-1 (SD & HD) & Jio Cinema App, 11 p.m. & 1.30 a.m. (Monday)

PVL: Sony Sports Ten 1 (SD & HD) & LIV, 6.30 & 8.30 p.m.

WPL: Sports 18-1 (SD & HD) & Jio Cinema App, 7.30 p.m.

Bundesliga: Sony Sports Ten 2 (SD & HD) & LIV, 8, 10 p.m. & 12 a.m. (Monday)

ISL: Sports 18-1 (SD & HD) & Jio Cinema App, 8.30 p.m.

New Zealand vs Australia: 2nd Test, day 4, Prime Video, 3.30 a.m. (Monday)

Mumbai, Vidarbha vie for the ultimate glory

With little to choose between the sides, it might well boil down to which team handles pressure better, presence of international stars adds spice

RANJI TROPHY FINAL

Amol Karhadkar
MUMBAI

Sweating it out: Shreyas and Shardul at a practice session at the Wankhede Stadium. EMMANUAL YOGINI

There is so much similarity and so many differences in what would be the last match – the Ranji Trophy final – of yet another gruelling senior domestic cricket season.

They belong to the same state. They speak the same language. But that's where the similarities end, especially in cricket parlance, for Mumbai and Vidarbha.

The differences are stark, as stark as the one between Mumbai and any other domestic side. Mumbai has won the glittering trophy a whopping 41 times and will be featuring in its 48th final of the 89 editions.

Vidarbha, on the other hand, will compete in its third Ranji final, starting at the Wankhede Stadium on Saturday.

In no way does history make it a David vs Goliath contest. The recent record makes Vidarbha a more successful outfit. Ever since Mumbai's 41th crown in 2015-16, Vidarbha have won both its championships.

On-song army

As a result, Akshay Wadkar's boys will be ready to take on Ajinkya Rahane's on-song army. Even in terms of strengths, there is little to choose from between both the teams.

Vidarbha's pace trio of veteran Umesh Yadav, Yash Thakur and Aditya Thakare can be as potent as Mumbai's Shardul Thakur, Tushar Deshpande and Mohit Avasthi. The unit that fires up front on an expected lively track at the Wankhede will definitely lend an upper hand to its side.

The spin factor

Even in the spin department, Vidarbha's Akshay Wakhare and Aditya Sarwate have a combined tally of 535 wickets, with the latter being the all-rounder. They can definitely match Tanush Kotian and Shams Mulani's exploits in both the departments.

It will thus be down to the side that bats better and soaks the big-match pressure that could well decide the fate of the Ranji final.

If Mumbai has Prithvi Shaw and Shreyas Iyer's charisma, Musheer Khan's ability to grind and an out-of-form Rahane's desperation to get back among runs, Vidarbha has professional Karun Nair and Dhruv Shorey's grit, Atharva Taide's flair and Wadkar's consistency.

If Vidarbha can soak in the big-match pressure, especially of playing the Ranji final against Mumbai in Mumbai, it will be a real stretch for Rahane and Co. to regain the trophy after eight years.

Rahane backs low-profile coaches in domestic cricket

Amol Karhadkar
MUMBAI

Ajinkya Rahane, the Mumbai captain, has stressed on valuing local and low-profile coaches in domestic cricket while taking a dig at "flashy coaches".

"It is really good to have a coach like Omkar (Salvi) with us. It shows that you don't need high-profile or flashy coaches to be around the team. You can still be under the radar. You can still stay low-profile and get the best out of each and every player," Rahane said here on Saturday, ahead of Mumbai's Ranji Trophy final against Vidarbha, starting on Sunday.

While Omkar Salvi – the former bowling coach of Mumbai and Kolkata Knight Riders – has excelled in keeping Mumbai's mission to regain the Ranji Trophy, Vidarbha have also fared well with Usman Ghani, the former stalwart, in charge.

"Omkar was with Mumbai team before earlier, but in a different role. Now as the head coach, the work he has done with every player, the amount of attention he has given to each and every player has been amazing," Rahane said.

"Even the Vidarbha coach, he is also very low-profile, so it's good to have low-profile coaches. They give importance to players. They give freedom to the players. It's a good sign for Indian cricket coaches. Even low-profile coaches can do the job for their team."

While Rahane stressed the team respected Vidarbha as an opposition, Vidarbha captain Akshay Wadkar attributed Vidarbha's performance to its depth at grass-root level.

"When we won the Ranji Trophy in 2017-18, we had won CK Nayudu Trophy prior to that, and even before that we had lifted the under 19-title, so those under-19 and under-23 players are now graduating to the Ranji Trophy," Wadkar said.

"Everyone comes up the ranks through performance. If we have done well in the last 10 years, it is because we have done well in all age groups.

Wadkar was confident Vidarbha will not wilt under the big-match pressure.

"It's a special game for us. Any final is special, particularly the Ranji final and more so against 41-times champion. We look at this as a good opportunity to beat a big side," he said.

West Brook triumphs

BENGALURU: S. Attaollahi trained West Brook (Akshay Kumar up) won the Sir Charles Todhunter Memorial Trophy, the main event of the races held here on Saturday (Mar 9). The winner is owned by M/s. DT Racing & Breeding rep. by Mr. D.R. Thacker & Mr. Mukul A. Sonawala.

1. SARB-KLA PLATE (DIV. II): THREE LITTLE WORDS (Rayan) 1, Sienna Princess (R. Pradeep) 2, Habibti (Antony) 3 and Days Date (L.A. Rozario) 4. Nk, 2 and 1-3/4. 1m 06.75s. Rs. 88 (w), 16, 12 and 12 (p), SHP: 30, THP: 41, FP: 287, Q: 85, Trinella: 576, Exacta: 3,358. Favourite: Sienna Princess.
Owner: Mr. H.S. Chandre Gowda. Trainer: Faraz Arshad.

2. KOPPAL PLATE: AQUAMATIC (Akshay K) 1, Stormy Ocean (Antony) 2, Ardakan (Arvind K) 3 and Armory (M. Rajesh K) 4. Nk, 3-1/4 and 1. 1m 37.47s. Rs. 27 (w), 13, 10 and 14 (p), SHP: 29, THP: 41, FP: 70, Q: 23, Trinella: 153, Exacta: 580. Favourite: Stormy Ocean.
Owners: Mr. D. Shailesh Shivaswamy, Dr. Dayananda Pai P, Mr. Naveen Preben Gowda & Mr. Kaardam Patel. Trainer: Azhar Ali.

3. SARB-KLA PLATE (DIV. I): LA MCQUEEN (Antony) 1, Mehra (Arvind K) 2, Dhanteras (M. Naveen) 3 and Carat Love (I. Chisty) 4. 3, 2-1/4 and 3-3/4. 1m 08.22s. Rs. 11 (w), 11, 13 and 31 (p), SHP: 26, THP: 59, FP: 31, Q: 32, Trinella: 284, Exacta: 790. Favourite: La Mcqueen.
Owner: Mr. Ganesan Subramanian. Trainer: Arjun Mangalorkar.

4. SOUPARNIKA PLATE (DIV. II): SEKHMET (G. Vivek) 1, Eco Friendly (Afsar Khan) 2, Mega Success (Jagadeesh) 3 and Sacred Creator (M. Rajesh K) 4. 3-3/4, 2-1/4 and 2. 1m 25.69s. Rs. 32 (w), 17, 19 and 21 (p), SHP: 52, THP: 44, FP: 191, Q: 73, Trinella: 1,272, Exacta: 9,068. Favourite: Sekhmet.
Owner: Mr. Vasanth Kumar T. S. Trainer: Kishan Thomas'.

5. SIR CHARLES TODHUNTER MEMORIAL TROPHY: WEST BROOK (Akshay K) 1, Victoria Doresaani (L.A. Rozario) 2, Crosswater (I. Chisty) 3 and Knotty Challenger (G. Vivek) 4. 1, 1 and 2-1/4. 1m 24.88s. Rs. 19 (w), 12, 14 and 24 (p), SHP: 29, THP: 57, FP: 49, Q: 32, Trinella: 237, Exacta: 683. Favourite: West Brook.
Owners: M/s. DT Racing & Breeding rep. by Mr. D.R. Thacker & Mr. Mukul A. Sonawala. Trainer: S. Attaollahi.

6. MANIKYADHARA FALLS PLATE: SUPER MARVELLA (Shreyas) 1, Norwegian Wood (Antony) 2, Serai (P. Siddaraju) 3 and Nevada Gold (G. Vivek) 4. 2-1/2, 2-3/4 and 1. 1m 38.14s. Rs. 72 (w), 25, 14 and 38 (p), SHP: 49, THP: 86, FP: 373, Q: 217, Trinella: 14,298, Exacta: 76,000. Favourite: Vyasa.
Owners: Mr. Santhosh G & Mr. Sujay Chandrahas'. Trainer: Neil Devaney.

7. SOUPARNIKA PLATE (DIV. I): LEX LUTHOR (Antony) 1, Ombudsman (G. Vivek) 2, Osiris (Afsar Khan) 3 and War Trail (R. Pradeep) 4. Not run: Cinco De Mayo. 1, 1-3/4 and 3/4. 1m 26.07s. Rs. 27 (w), 13, 14 and 18 (p), SHP: 37, THP: 33, FP: 87, Q: 40, Trinella: 276, Exacta: 547. Favourite: Lex Luthor.
Owner: Mr. Srinivasa M. Trainer: Kishan Thomas.
Jackpot: Rs. 2,239 (153 tkts); Runner up: 251 (584 tkts); Treble (i): 151 (56 tkts); (ii): 780 (18 tkts).

Mona Agarwal wins gold and Paralympic quota place

Sports Bureau
NEW DELHI

Mona Agarwal won the women's air rifle gold and the Paralympic quota place for Paris in the WSPS World Cup at the Dr. Karni Singh Range, Tughlakabad, on Saturday.

It was the ninth Paralympic quota for India.

The results: R1 men's 10m air rifle standing: 1. Lee Jangho (Kor) 249.9 (621.6); 2. Yerkin Gabbasov (Kaz) 246.8 (619.0); 3. Sotirios Galogavros (Gre) 224.8 (622.6); 9. Mahavir Unhalkar 615.0.
S2 women's 10m air rifle standing: 1. Mona Agarwal 250.7 (618.0); 2. Zhang Cuiping (Chn) 248.8 (627.7); 3. Avani Lekhara 227.0 (623.9).
P3 Mixed 25m pistol: 1. Yang Chao (Chn) 27 (589 WR); 2. Szymon Sowinski (Pol) 24 (565); 3. Huang Xing (Chn) 21 (580); 4. Vikash Bhatiwal 16 (566).

Shafeel fires Services to a seventh Santosh Trophy title

Job well done: The Services team celebrates after beating Goa in the final. RITU RAJ KONWAR

Amitabha Das Sharma
YUPIA (ARUNACHAL)

P.P. Shafeel scored with a spectacular pile-driver to help Services beat a strong Goa by a solitary goal in the final to lift the Santosh Trophy for the seventh time in the history of the premier inter-state senior men's football competition.

The opening session at the Golden Jubilee Stadium ended goalless as the attackers failed at both ends. There was no dearth of action though as both sides adopted an open approach. They produced some nice raids that were either neutralised in the box or went wide for want of precision.

The second session came alive with more concentrated efforts from Services, which started probing the Goa box with more purpose. Goa goalkeeper Antonio Da Silva made a crucial save in the 50th minute to make up for the mistake of his defensive colleague Deeshank Kunkalikar, who miscued a clearance to let Services right-half Subham Rana have a crack.

Services kept pressing for the lead and found it in the 67th minute when midfielder Rahul Ramakrishnan set up Saheel outside the Goa box. The Services right-back answered with a powerful grounder that went through Da Silva's defences.

Goa went in the hunt for the equaliser and came close to finding it on at least three occasions. But Services' defence stuck to its task and found the clearances at the right moment.

The best chance came in injury-time (90+3 minute) when Deeshank put in a nice cross for substitute Joshua D'Silva. The latter's header beat the Services goalkeeper Abdul Kadir but Pradeep Kumar cleared from the line to save the day for Services.

The result: Services 1 (P.P. Shafeel 67) bt Goa 0.

Parray's winner puts spanner in CFC's playoff hopes

ISL-10

Sankar Narayanan E.H.
CHENNAI

A spirited Hyderabad FC spoiled Chennaiyin FC's plans of putting itself in a better position in the playoff race with a 1-0 victory, its first in this edition of the Indian Super League here on Saturday.

Sajad Parray found the net for the visitor in the 90th minute. Lalchhanhima Sailo's free-kick into the box was not properly dealt with by the CFC defenders, and Parray was quick to pounce on the chance.

Owen Coyle's side is now 11th on the points table with 18 points from 18 games. Thangboi Singto's team remains 12th with eight points from 19 outings. The first half saw the host create many chances but failing to find the finishing touch to bulge the net.

The first big opportunity came through Rafael Crivellaro's through ball to Ninthoinganba Meetei, who could only find the side netting. Farukh Choudhary rattled the post in the 24th minute after receiving a short pass from Vincy Barretto. The host also had a penalty shout when Vincy was tackled by Jeremy Zohminghlua.

Solo act: Hyderabad's Parray celebrates after scoring. M. VEDHAN

HFC had its fair share of chances on either side of the half-time break.

Abdul Rabeeh's strong header from the box beat Debjit Majumder, hit the woodwork, and fell right on the goal line. Joseph Sunny, too, hit the far post after chancing upon a ball in front of the goal.

Red card

Hyderabad was down to 10 men after M. Rafi was given a second yellow card in the dying minutes, but it was all too late for Chennaiyin.

The result:
Chennaiyin FC 0 lost to Hyderabad FC 1 (Parray 90).

Kochi scripts its first win of season in its last outing

PVL

Sports Bureau
CHENNAI

Kochi Blue Spikers ended its campaign in the third season of the RuPay Prime Volleyball League here on Saturday, defeating Hyderabad Black Hawks 15-12, 15-12, 15-11. Jibin Sebastian was named Player of the Match. This was its first victory for the season.

Sunday will be the final day of the league matches before the Super 5s begin on Monday.

Both the matches on Sunday – between Ahmedabad Defenders and Delhi Toofans, and between Chennai Blitz and Calicut Heroes – will be important in more ways than one.

Calicut, Ahmedabad and Delhi are the top three teams in the league with 10 points each from seven outings – Bengaluru Torpedoes is fourth with 10 from eight.

Chennai – eight points from seven matches – must win against Calicut to make it to the next stage. In that case, Chennai will push Mumbai Meteors (10 from eight) out from the fifth place. If not, Mumbai will qualify for the Super 5s.

Set difference

If either of Ahmedabad, Delhi Toofans or Calicut wins their respective matches, they will all have 12 points.

In that case, the team that has the best set difference will top the league.

Being No.1 in the league will ensure that the team carries forward two points into the super 5s while the second team in the league will get one point.

Sunday will be the final day of the league matches before the Super 5s begin on Monday.
Calicut, Ahmedabad and Delhi are the top three teams in the league with 10 points each from seven outings
Chennai — eight points from seven matches — must win against Calicut to make it to the next stage.
If not, Mumbai will qualify for the Super 5s.